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AVOWALS

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AVOWALS

BY

GEORGE MOORE

NEW YORK
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AVOWALS

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CHAPTER 1.

MAID. Mr Edmund Gosse.

MOORE. My dear Gosse, how glad I am to see you, and how well timed your visit is, you will acknowledge when I tell you that five minutes before the door opened I left my writings—you see them all scattered over the table—and came to this fire (which, by the way, isn't wanted on a day like this) to dream of—whom do you think?—of you, of course, and that two human beings so different as ourselves should have been friends for forty years. It must be nearly as long as that.

GOSSE. Differences in temperament draw men together.

> Are we not formed as notes of music are
> For one another though dissimilar ?

A late spring fire is responsible for many dreams; but I should have preferred to hear that it had set you thinking of the art that has united us, rather than of superficial differences that failed to divide us. With you it has been as with me, not a day passing these forty years without our meditating on the mystery of our art. But I will not delay. I merely came——

MOORE. You must not go. This visit is most opportune. I've been trying to write this afternoon and for many previous afternoons for the last fortnight, beginning the same thing over and over again and again and starting afresh. It was my literary perplexities, teasing difficulties, that set me dreaming of you, sitting pen in hand, your eyes fixed on a clear vision, transcribing it from time to time accurately and harmoniously, sentence rising out of sentence, paragraph out of paragraph. Have I not seen your manuscript, only a word altered here and there?

GOSSE. But if I do not change on paper, I change in my mind. I sit pen in hand until the sentence is completely formed, and any quality that my prose may have it gets from the pen. If I were to dictate as you do——

MOORE. My dictation is the cartoon, and the quality, as you call it, and rightly comes when I begin to lick the sentences together.

GOSSE. I couldn't write that way.

MOORE. To me it is incredible that a man should be able to arrange his composition beforehand and execute it sentence by sentence. Your method reminds me of painting as it was done in Paris in the seventies, piece by piece, leaving off in the middle of an eye, and finishing the second half the next day. The painter's task, though difficult, was accomplished upon a drawing, but you are always, if I may so express myself, in mid-air, finding your way like the swallow. You find it, it is true, and I believe you to be without chart or compass since you say it. I believe, as the pious Christian believes, because it is incredible.

GOSSE. I hold the road in my mind's eye.

MOORE. But the mind's eye cannot carry the various aspects of the road and the multiple incidents of the road. But why do I say cannot? My own mind alone is known to me, and every time I begin a fresh subject it seems as if I should never succeed in unravelling it. Our minds are as different as our lives have been. You married early in life, and a gulf divides the man that marries in the beginning from the man who decides in the beginning that he will remain a bachelor. Your life has been spent in your own home among your family and in clubs. You look at this moment as if you had come from your club. You were educated, and you know literature, Greek and Roman, French, German, besides a good smattering of Scandinavian. No lives were ever so different as ours, nor temperaments. It never happened to you to rush out after dinner to see a friend, or even to desire to do such a thing. Never have I known you to pay a casual visit before to-day.

GOSSE. My wife begged of me——

MOORE. It was not then a desire to see an old friend that compelled you from the Athenæum, that august abode of prelacy and literature. I am disappointed. I can see you coming through the portals with his Grace, noticing, as soon as you are in the air, that an acid little wind is blowing through the sunshine. You finger the lappet of his lordship's overcoat, saying: Rather thin for the season, and, having deposited his Grace in his carriage and waited till the rug was tucked about the episcopal breeches, you hailed a hansom. Did you not feel yourself to be somewhat of a hypocrite when you called out—you didn't dare to call out: 121 Ebury Street, within hearing of his Grace's coachman? You lowered your voice as a man does on his way——

GOSSE. I cannot allow you to indulge your imagination any longer, though it is all very amusing. I must beg you to receive without delay my wife's message. We have some distinguished visitors coming to see us on Sunday, and she will find it hard to forgive you if you do not help us to entertain them. Among them are——

MOORE. A Scandinavian critic and a Danish poet——

GOOSE. I will not stay to hear you talk nonsense any longer about the nationalities of our visitors, which do not concern you at all, and I'll go so far as to say that your remarks make me regret that I broke through my usual custom of communicating by letter rather than by word of mouth. For it is, as you say, not my custom to call without an appointment, and what has happened to-day will not encourage me to repeat my experiment.

MOORE. I'm sorry indeed if my reckless imagination is to deprive me of your company this afternoon, for never in my life did I need it more. Literature needs your help, as you will see if you will forgive your volatile friend his levity, which, though incurable, is harmless. I beg of you to return to your chair, for I cannot talk to you if you stand irate on the hearthrug fuming. Can I do more than apologize for having allowed my imagination to wander about the portals of the Athenæum?

GOSSE. But I don't belong to that club.

MOORE. Then why be angry; it is only reasonable to be angry at the truth. I shall be glad to entertain your friends to the best of my ability whatever their nationalities, if——

GOSSE. You make my wife's request conditional?

MOORE. I beseech you not to be so prickly. I make no conditions. I'll come next Sunday to tea even though I cannot persuade you to stay to help me. Only this do I ask, that you will allow me to tell you that the subject I have been trying to write for the last fortnight arose out of one of the subtlest of your critical remarks, for me the most significant single sentence you ever wrote, or that any man wrote, a sentence that captured and held me ever since, driving me at last to the creation of the idea, an essay. Half-an-hour of your time is all I ask for, and your own thought having caused the need you can hardly refuse me half-an-hour of your time. Our art calls to you.

GOSSE. You have certainly set me wondering what was the epigram, maxim, aphorism, apophthegm, or truism that has caused all the trouble with which I see the dining-room table littered.

MOORE. You wrote, but when you wrote the sentence that captured my imagination I cannot tell you—it must have been in some essay or preface; a casual remark you seemed to consider it, for you did not develop the thought;

I wish you had, for had you done so you might have removed some of the errors with which literary criticism is beset; but no, you just said, as if the remark was of no particular importance, that English genius had gone into poetry. And it was this remark thrown out casually that fired my imagination. A seemingly unending perspective opened up before me.

Germany, I said, expresses herself in music; France and Italy in the plastic arts; England, as Gosse says, in poetry. Our poetical literature is the most beautiful, but outside of poetry English genius has accomplished little or nothing.

GOSSE. You wouldn't go so far as to say that English genius has accomplished nothing in prose.

MOORE. English genius has certainly found abundant expression in the essay. Landor, Pater, De Quincey, Lamb. You know how I have yielded to these writers, and yourself has demurred on more than one occasion to my unorthodox faith that more human souls rise out of Landor's *Imaginary Conversations* than out of Shakespeare's plays. Our conversation became strained as the conversation frequently became between Bishop Parker and Andrew Marvel. You remember the extraordinary inrush of character at the words: I shudder. At these the Bishop rises into our consciousness, a spiritual entity; in all Shakespeare is there anything so swift and telling? But we must keep to the subject of this discussion, that English prose narrative is the weakest part of our literature.

GOSSE. With the exception of one or two masterpieces.

MOORE. I cannot allow that there are any masterpieces in English prose narrative, for masterpieces are written only by first-rate minds, and I think you will agree with me that only the inferior or—shall we say?—the subaltern mind has attempted prose narrative in England.

GOSSE. If we waive the smaller prose narratives of

Elizabethan times, we come upon a very remarkable narrative, *Robinson Crusoe.* But I see your point. Defoe sold his pen willingly to whosoever could afford to pay for the writing of political pamphlets, lampoons, scurrilous novels, literary garbage of all kinds; but you must remember that a man ceases to be a hack writer as soon as he writes a masterpiece.

Moore. I had not intended to speak of Defoe. Fielding seemed to give my essay a better start, for in *Tom Jones* we find the family, and in the drawing-room for the first time. Defoe was, as you say, a hack writer, and the theme of my essay is that inferior writers seized upon English prose narrative as a means of getting money; and the fact that Defoe was inspired during the first half of *Robinson Crusoe* does not impugn or cast a doubt on the validity of my theme. If he'd been inspired from start to finish, the matter would be different. English fiction never finishes gallantly; the writers swerve across the course or bolt out of it, or stick out their toes, turn it up, as the phrase goes. Forgive this description in racing parlance. English fiction is a hackney; French and Russian narrative shows more breeding. This can hardly be denied.

Gosse. I certainly do not deny it.

Moore. It would seem, then, that my essay must begin with Defoe; not with Defoe, but with Defoe's last word, *Robinson Crusoe,* the most English of all books. We are islanders, Crusoe was one. Our business is the sea. Crusoe was constantly occupied going to and fro from a wreck. We are a prosaic people, what the French would call *terre à terre.* Nobody was more *terre à terre* than Crusoe. England seems to have expressed herself in her first narrative uncommonly well. You see, my dear Gosse, that this conversation is already beginning to bear fruit. It must be fifty years since I read *Robinson Crusoe,* but the construction from the first part of the story is so regular that it seems to me as if I could read the book in memory. The going back and forth on a raft to get food; the finding of the fowling-pieces and cordials. How often did he mention that he had discovered a case of cordials? I used to wonder what cordials were, and why he attached so much importance to the finding of them, for I come of a family that has been sober for many generations. It seems to me that I remember his house and the building of the boat, and the current that nearly carried him out of sight of the island, for the boat could not be steered out of the current till he hoisted a sail. It was difficult for a child to comprehend how a sail that carried him more swiftly from the island than the current was doing could at the same time enable him to steer out of the current. He was almost out of sight of the island when he put up the sail, and it was with a great relief that I read that the boat answered the helm as soon as her speed exceeded the speed of the current. The unfortunate Stevenson who tried to write books of adventures merely wrote a succession of accidents, but in *Robinson Crusoe* every incident is necessary; and every one is shapen perfectly, and fits into its place; at the right moment we are told that Crusoe's powder and shot began to run short, so, instead of shooting the goats, he trapped them; the wild goats became tame and gave him milk, and from the milk he may have made butter and cheese; I've forgotten. But he certainly made himself a suit of clothes out of goat skins, and what is wonderful in this adventure story is the moral idea: man alone with Nature. Defoe may have gotten the desert island from Juan Fernandez, but he got the unforgettable incident, the footprint on the sand, out of his own mind, and the subsequent discovery that cannibals had been on the island and indulged in a cannibal feast. In considering the beauty of the subject that chance dropped in front of Defoe (true that it dropped in front of many besides Defoe), it may occur to us that for full justice to be done to it a man who was at once a poet, a philosopher, and a great descriptive writer was needed, but on consideration doubts will soon begin to arise if this be so, and we begin to think that perhaps the story gains by an unaffected absence of the grand style. The first part of the story could not be improved, but the end is a sad spectacle for us men of letters—the uninspired trying to continue the work of the inspired.

Gosse. It is quite true that very few people continue the book after Crusoe leaves the island, and your description of the uninspired trying to continue the work of the inspired must be accepted, I think, as a just criticism and judgment of the book's end; and I suppose I must allow that if a man fails to hold the mean in his narrative, and all the way, from end to end, he cannot be looked upon as a genius of the first rank.

Moore. The man of talent may be inspired, but the moment of inspiration gone by, he writes like a dolt.

Gosse. Not so a man of genius; he always writes well; he never gives the show away. But my apologies for a colloquialism seemingly necessary for the occasion. I see you look upon the end of *Robinson Crusoe* as a complete failure.

Moore. An end that nobody reads cannot be looked upon as else than a failure, and the true end seems so plain that I am puzzled. After the evangelisation of Friday I've forgotten if Crusoe taught Friday his catechism and his prayers; if he didn't, the oversight is incomprehensible; but if we begin by supposing that he did not miss this very English point, Crusoe would be moved to consider his own life in relation to Friday.

Gosse. He did not miss the evangelisation.

Moore. I am sincerely glad to hear it. After Friday had been instructed in the doctrine of the Atonement, the thought would cross Crusoe's mind that his life and the savage's would shape out into an admirable romance; but he would be deterred from writing the book for a long time, thinking that no one would ever read it, not even Friday.

GOSSE. Pens and ink and paper are not available on a desert island.

MOORE. There was a wreck.

GOSSE. The wreck had gone to pieces long ago. True, he might have saved a good deal of writing material from the first wreck. But the dislike to pass out of this life without leaving some record of our passage through it is one entirely alien to the character of Robinson Crusoe. You would make him into an artist. Defoe was particularly careful to avoid this mistake, for he explains, as you would have seen if you had read the end of the book, that Robinson Crusoe does not write his story till he has exhausted all the occupations he can devise. It is not till he has tied up the last fruit tree that he sits down to write his story.

MOORE. A time-worn literary trick that betrays the hack writer. Let us avail ourselves, if needs must be, of it on the island; and, accepting Defoe's own subterfuge, I say that the taming and instruction of Friday being completed there remains little daily work for Crusoe. Friday does the work, and, finding the afternoons a little languid, Crusoe begins to dream, and before long his dreams are of another ship come to rescue his manuscript. Another ship, he says, will come sooner or later, and he'd just as lief be read after his death as before. Crusoe should die before Friday, for some admirable pages might be written on the grief of the man Friday, intermingled with fears lest his kindred should return and eat him, Friday, not Crusoe; and Friday, true to his evangelisation, would bury Crusoe with all the prayers he could remember.

GOSSE. But who would write this? You cannot have two pair of eyes on the island.

MOORE. Crusoe must not meet with sudden death, rather an accident among the cliffs that would allow him to continue his memoirs from time to time. I would have the last page of the manuscript relate Crusoe's anxiety for Friday, who he foresees will die of grief, and Friday's last act, the placing of the manuscript in the cave hard by the grave which would be necessary for the completion of the story, for it is the manuscript that explains to the captain of the next ship that visits the island the presence of the skeleton by the grave. The discovery of and the reading of the manuscript would have given Defoe an opportunity to evolve a new soul—the captain's. How the poor savage must have grieved for his saviour and master! Like a dog, the captain mutters as he turns the last page.

GOSSE. I can see that a good deal is to be said in favour of entrusting you with the task of providing new ends to old masterpieces.

MOORE. If we begin to put jokes on each other we shall never arrive at the end of our task, which is a long one, a review of the history of prose narrative in England.

GOSSE. Your end strikes me as admirable, but it would require a greater writer than Defoe to execute it, and I'm glad you were not by to suggest it.

MOORE. Why?

GOSSE. I'm afraid the new wine would have burst the old bottles—with that end in view he might not have succeeded in writing the story.

MOORE. You must not think that I'm providing a definite plan for the completion of the story. I'm only throwing out hints. But there can be no doubt that Defoe would have done better had he kept Crusoe on the island. And it would be amusing to write the end on the lines I have suggested, doing for Defoe what

Wagner did for Gluck and what Liszt did for many writers. Why should the arrangements of masterpieces be limited to music? Why should we not rearrange literary masterpieces?

Gosse. The rearrangement would not prove acceptable.

Moore. It would, if the rearrangement were better than the original.

Gosse. *Don Quixote* is another masterpiece that ends unsatisfactorily.

Moore. I'm glad you mentioned *Don Quixote.* Defoe called him to your mind, for he, too, was a literary hack, writing many comedies, autos and poems, unworthy trash, till he stumbled upon a subject which he wrote as well as it could be written till he came to the end of his inspiration. The coming to the end of one's inspiration is always pathetic, and for Cervantes the loss was doubly cruel, for it came suddenly and went suddenly, like a wind. A fine wind it was while it lasted; a finer never blew peradventure, not excepting the wind that carried the plays along—*Hamlet* and *Lear.* Cervantes sailed out of harbour in a grand gale. Who lives that does not sometimes think of the Castilian gentleman, exalted by a long reading of the literature of knight errantry, discovering armour in a garret and repairing the helmet with brown paper on wire?

Gosse. Admirable, thrice admirable is the description of the knight himself. Nor do I think that it is going too far to say that never in literature has so perfect a correspondence been found between the spirit and the flesh. And all you who have sought for this correspondence will accept the knight of the rueful countenance as the unparalleled example in which the flesh or lack of flesh proclaims the soul.

Moore. Tourguéneff descried a fitting envelope for the spirit of Bazaroff, but Tourguéneff's conception is small compared with the world-wide figure of the knight riding forth by himself in the first instance, and then returning in search of an esquire. As we watch the twain riding side by side through the highlands, we seem to be looking upon some great sculpture of Egypt and Assyria. Never was the world so wide before nor gestures so eternal.

GOSSE. And we seem to be listening to Shakespeare himself, who was a contemporary; and this sets me thinking that perhaps the special quality of their humour was not the insular possession of England, but belonged to the great century that produced these two men. They could not have known each other, and yet—— But I must not allow our conversation to drift into Shakespearean controversy. You said that never was the world so wide before nor gestures so eternal.

MOORE. As in the first adventures when the knight charged the flock and afterwards the windmill. And is it not thrilling to remember that they were on their way to the inn in which Don Quixote was enrolled by the innkeeper into the order of knighthood; and indeed I cannot keep myself from mentioning the vigil undertaken at the instigation of the innkeeper, or of telling you that it was the innkeeper who sent the knight home in search of an esquire. The Don returns with Sancho mounted on an ass! Was ever before an imagination so epical? And how splendid the blanketing of Sancho in the inn and the account of the evil-smelling slut stealing by mistake into the knight's bed, and he lying between sleeping and waking, dreaming of Dulcinea, instead of into the bed of the lusty waggoner who had been looking forward to her all that day for many weary miles. After reading these pages I lay immersed in genius, like a mediæval saint in God, the host still melting on his tongue; and I continued in ecstasy till the twain reached an almost savage landscape, admirably described.

The time must have been late in the afternoon, for there still lingers in my mind a memory of peaks brilliant against the sun setting, and my ear still holds like a shell Don Quixote's voice telling Sancho that he wishes to strip himself naked and stand upon his head, and Sancho begging the knight to refrain, saying that the sight of his master's naked rump in the air will bring up his stomach.

GOSSE. You will allow me to interrupt you for a moment. The credit of introducing landscape into fiction has always been granted to Rousseau. But your mention of the rugged landscape in Cervantes puts it into my mind that the honour of introducing landscape background into fiction really belongs to Cervantes. I remember the landscape you allude to; it is brushed in with the energy of Salvator Rosa.

MOORE. It is, indeed, and many others. But I would remind you that yourself deprecated the introduction of Shakespearean controversy into our talk, and you did well, and I did ill when I spoke of Egyptian and Assyrian sculpture, for the landscapes through which the knight and his escort follow their adventures are superterrestrial. We have left our miserable little planet for a larger one, Jupiter maybe, and the book drops from our hands in amazement when the Don throws his heels into the air. Cervantes' last inspiration, no, the last is Sancho turning in the saddle, and catching sight of the knight's shanks above his shirt, he drops into reverie, falls to considering his relation, for he is on his way back to recount the knight's last exploits to Dulcinea.

The book should have ended here, for God himself could not have invented adventures more wonderful than those that have been. I have forgotten if the meeting with the gang of convicts, and the subsequent misunderstanding, and the severe beating he receives as soon as he freed them from their chains, comes just before or just after Sancho's departure. For the sake of a clear division between the inspired and the uninspired Cervantes, I would have it come before. But it may come in the next division of the story, Nature being the real author and Cervantes no more than her mouthpiece. Nature is good at detail, but lacks rhythm; she lingers and spoils the harvest with an aftermath. It may come in the next division, yet I do not see how it can, for we are introduced to new characters, and stories are told that no one remembers—Moorish maidens who became Christians and such like. A faint memory lingers in me of a curate. Do you remember?

Gosse. My unfortunate memory, oh, my unfortunate memory.

Moore. There is no reason for being disheartened, not this time, for it may be doubted if even Mr Fitzmaurice Kelly could give any lucid account of these stories, though he refused to collaborate with me in an edition that would exclude all extraneous matter and follow closely the fortunes of the knight and his esquire. He was right, for his closer study of the book than mine had revealed to him, let us hope, the truth that the original inspiration was too wonderful to be continued by Gods or men; and henceforth Cervantes, the hack writer, turns the handle of his hurdy gurdy, setting Don Quixote and his esquire dancing to the old tune—Don Quixote starting out on some new adventure, Sancho holding up his hands.

Gosse. It has often been said that a finer and nobler nature begins to appear in the knight in the second part; and I do not think that this is true to nature, for if we contain any grain of good it ripens as we live.

Moore. The change in the knight, if there be any change, does not help us to any new appreciation of him, and I say this though I know in saying it I am at variance with Tourguéneff, who drew the attention of the Moscow students to the death of Don Quixote trampled to death by a herd of swine, and to the last words of the chivalrous knight. I will not ask you what they are; I, too, have forgotten them, and only remember that: though all things pass away, even beauty, chivalry and truth, goodness remains. A stupid paraphrase, doubtless, but a beautiful idea it is, truly, that he who had followed goodness all his life long should find his death at last under cloven hooves. But the herd of swine is introduced into the story casually—a casual thought introduced into a casually composed sequel in which Sancho becomes a pour of proverbial wisdom while the knight rides wrapped in his meditations, like Falstaff, for Shakespeare, too, intellectualised his knight, thereby puzzling the mummers who try to portray him. But, as you just said, we must not allow Shakespearean controversy to beguile us from our search of a first-rate mind expressing itself in English prose narrative.

GOSSE. As that is our quest, it seems to me that I cannot do better than to ask you to put a precise meaning on the words: a first-rate mind. Kant's mind was first-rate, but it was not the sort of mind that instigated works of art, and it has often occurred to me that something more than mere mind is necessary to produce the pictures —shall we say?—of Manet and Degas? Yet a mind is visible in their works.

MOORE. I wonder if we can differentiate between the mind and the instincts of the mind? If we can, I should prefer to say that instincts of the mind are discernible in the works of the great masters. But I'm always apprehensive of metaphysical quicksands and mists, and before putting down the helm I will remark that the artist's instinct is the sail that carries the boat along, and his reason the rudder that keeps the boat's head to the wind; without a rudder the sail loses the wind. The simile seems to hold good. An instinct will carry the artist some distance, but if we have not reason he will drift like the rudderless boat, making no progress at all.

GOSSE. As good an explanation as we shall get of something that will always remain a mystery. And if I may continue your thought for you I would say that works in which reason plays too large a part do not satisfy us.

MOORE. Our instincts are deeper than our reason, and it is pleasant to remember that art rises out of our primal nature, and that the art that never seems trivial is instinctive.

GOSSE. If I may do so without seeming egotistical, I would remind you that I have touched on the same point in my *History of English Literature,* saying that George Eliot seems trivial, especially in the books in which she was anxious to seem profound.

MOORE. Quite so. Manet was never anxious, and did not waste time at keyholes like Degas, but said, if not aloud, to himself, we are original or we aren't, but we do not become original by sending away the model who weighs eight stone, and calling in the butcher's wife who weighs twenty-nine, and asking her to strip and stand in front of a tin bath, or by painting one cheek of the wife's backside green and the other blue, like Besnard.

GOSSE. You would regard George Eliot as a trivial writer, and Sterne as serious?

MOORE. Of course I should, Gosse; you're helping me; I cannot find words to tell you how much, and my essay seems to be coming. You're not going? I will not hear of your going; back to your chair, for you're helping me even more than I expected you would, and I expected a great deal of help from you. . . . You are helping me, putting the words I want into my mouth, that the English novel is silly, illiterate, sentimental, erudite and pompous by turns; but serious, never! How true! And how could it be else, for in the seventeenth century we were living in moated castles defended by retainers who dined with their chief in banqueting halls, raising or lowering the drawbridge as the occasion required; life was too unsettled to admit a literature whose subject must always be, perhaps to a large extent, a description of social life; and it would seem that social life was thrust somewhat suddenly upon England, drawing-rooms or salons having just arrived from France, unintroduced by any sufficient prose literature. But without regard for this lack of preparation the drawing-rooms insisted on being entertained, and they took what they could get—*Tom Jones.* I see it all; there was no standard, and it was out of the enthusiasm of our first drawing-rooms that the belief arose which soom developed into a tradition, that *Tom Jones* should be accepted as the classic example of English prose narrative.

GOSSE. Scion of the Georgian house.

MOORE. Yes, sprung from the Georgian house—from the Georgian drawing-room.

GOSSE. You couldn't find a better springboard for your essay.

MOORE. I'm glad you think so, and I hope you will allow me to continue talking a little longer. You've no idea what a help you are.

GOSSE. Proceed.

MOORE. I read *Tom Jones* in the influence of the tradition that I have just mentioned, and——

GOSSE. I hope you haven't neglected to look into the book again, for if you haven't I cannot help you.

MOORE. Yes, I've looked into the book, and it seemed more lifeless than it did twenty years before, when I read it for the first time. It was then as an old and withered tree, whitened branches and gaping trunk——

GOSSE. Ready to fall, having aged almost out of recognition in the last twenty years. An excellent impression of a decaying masterpiece; but something more than an impression is necessary in an essay.

MOORE. I can only write my own feelings, and shall have to say that at the end of the first hundred pages the book fell across my knees and set me asking myself how our forefathers had managed to read a book without a glimpse of the world without us, or any account of the world within. It is difficult, Gosse, to write vividly about an entirely empty book, vague, like a fog, yet without mystery, and so impersonal that we begin to doubt the existence of the author, and in self-defence have to urge ourselves out of the belief that the book proceeded from some curious machine, a lost invention of the eighteenth century. Machinery was in its infancy in 1750, so we know that a living man must have written it or dictated it, and the theory that it was gabbled into a phonograph is untenable. Even so, the impersonality of the book would surprise us, so empty are the pages of all traces of preferences and aversions. Since I have begun I must tell all, Gosse. Fielding seems to have been without sensibility of any kind, mental or physical, and his book is therefore the most personal and at the same time the most impersonal ever written. Mr Allworthy, the first person we meet in it, says nothing that brings him before us; we are told nothing about him, though he is the owner of the Georgian house in which the first scenes are laid and the pivot on which the story turns, and we drop the book to consider this strange reticence, coming at last to believe that the author felt it would be difficult for him to set before the reader a man so transparently conventional that he could not be even suspected of having begotten a love child, and shrank from a task which, even if it were successful, might weary the reader, to fall back upon a simpler plan of exposition, saying to himself: the obvious is always the best, and I will call the gentleman Allworthy; the name will allay suspicion even in the most prone to suspicion. A daring interpretation this is of Fielding's mind during the composition of the first part of his notable novel which you may accept or——

GOSSE. Forgive me for interrupting you, but I would not have you fall into the mistake of finding fault with an eighteenth-century author for not writing naturalistically.

Moore. I think my words were: without a glimpse of the world without us, and to these I might have added: without even such glimpses as we get from Jean Jacques. In *Tom Jones* we are in a fieldless, treeless, flowerless planet; but even Fielding's indifference to nature would not matter if the book were not passionless; any sudden movement of passion or feeling would provoke our sympathy, and we should see in our imagination the sun lighting up the middle distance and the raincloud above it. A description of Manon is not to be found in the text, but Manon is always before our eyes, for Abbé Prevost realised Manon intensely, whereas Fielding, in his attempt to describe Sophia, shows himself as insensible to the magic of woman as he is to that of nature.

Gosse. It is probable that Fielding succeeded better with men than with women, and you will not deny that Squire Western is a very real person and one very typical of the eighteenth century.

Moore. Squire Western goes his own gait and speaks his own lingo; we see and hear him; but, if I may say so without seeming to disparage Fielding needlessly, Squire Western is too obvious to be considered highly; he is hardly more worthy of æsthetic criticism than the caricatures of Gilray and Rowlandson. I would not mitigate a merit, but I would have it understood that Nature draws so well sometimes that even a very bad draughtsman cannot miss a likeness. There can be little doubt that Squire Western is a rough sketch from life, and the invention of the different episodes in the book are so poor that I am inclined to believe that the one good one, the Squire's relinquishment of his pursuit of Sophia, to follow a pack of foxhounds that crossed the road in pursuit of a fox, was, like the Squire himself, taken from life.

Gosse. But you admire Rowlandson?

MOORE. Yes, I admire Rowlandson till somebody speaks of Goya.

GOSSE. And you know that Thackeray said that since *Tom Jones* nobody had dared to paint the portrait of a man in fiction, meaning, I take it, that Fielding was the first to tell us that a young man might be truly in love with Sophia Western and yet commit an act of impropriety with Molly Seagrim.

MOORE. A knowledge which he might have gathered from observation of his bull terrier; and my reproach is that Fielding has not attempted to differentiate between dogkind and mankind, and that he does not seem aware that it is necessary to do so, not even in his own mind.

GOSSE. Have you nothing to say in praise of Fielding's style?

MOORE. He writes with gusto, a quality we seldom meet with in modern literature, perhaps because we are becoming more thoughtful; and he keeps it up like an actor who knows he is playing in a bad play.

GOSSE. But you have not told me how you explain away Thackeray's preference for *Tom Jones*.

MOORE. I find the examination of my own mind so difficult that I cannot for the moment undertake to examine Thackeray's. The best plan will be to try to believe that he spoke casually.

GOSSE. Now I must reprove you for a lack of seriousness. For nearly two hundred years Fielding has held undisputed sway as our prime novelist.

MOORE. We shall meet others in the course of our literary inquisition whose reputations seem as unmerited as Fielding's. I know, I feel that the prospect is a little alarming, but we have lighted our lanterns and are looking about for a serious writer. Let us get on.

GOSSE. But how shall we recognize him should we meet him?

MOORE. Now, Gosse, you are inventing difficulties that do not exist, and I must reprove you, for was it not you that put forward Laurence Sterne and George Eliot as typical examples of the serious and trivial in literature? and with these in mind we shall not miss a really serious writer if our lights should flash him into view. A little patience is all I ask, Gosse; other examples will be discovered later, but we may not anticipate them, for I am eager to remind you that in your *History of English Literature* you speak of the extreme beauty of Sterne's style, and the adjective pleases me; I cannot tell you why, but it seems to me to discover the truth, or some of it, and I would merely add that no writer has come down so unchanged as Sterne.

GOSSE. And I welcome the addition. I'm glad that we agree about Sterne.

MOORE. But, my dear friend, we are always agreed, except when you speak of Sterne's unseemly life; a sad remark that is of yours, and if I may be permitted to say so, lacking point; for we could not have Sterne's style without his unseemly life, we accept the one for the sake of the other, just as we accept the unseemliness of Christianity in practice for the sake of the words of Jesus, overlooking the Bishop of London, who——

GOSSE. I'm afraid you don't know the Bishop of London.

MOORE. My writings have placed me, alas, under interdiction, and so have yours, Gosse. You mentioned that you are not a member of his club, but neglected to say that you would have been if you had not written a masterpiece. The truth, Gosse.

GOSSE. The Athenæum Club is becoming wearisome, and I must insist that we return to Sterne without delay. I'm glad that you approve of my adjective, but why it should have taken your fancy so completely I cannot imagine—not at this moment.

MOORE. You say that his selected elements attract the imitation of some more or less analogous spirit, meaning thereby that his selected elements excite an analogous spirit to imitation, a criticism that has a special interest for me, for before I read a line of *Tristram Shandy* or *The Sentimental Journey*, the newspapers began to say that the prose of *Hail and Farewell* recalled Sterne. That my best pages should recall the worst in *The Sentimental Journey*, if it be possible to discern a page less inspired than its fellow in a fully inspired work, pleases me to hear, for we may be pleased by flattery without being duped by flattery; and, my curiosity awakened by constant references to Sterne while my book was under review, I abstracted a little red book from the library of a common friend, saying to myself: many empty days lie before me, and though I cannot read in a railway train I may be able to read on board a ship. And I read despite the drumming of the screw, raising my eyes from time to time from the exquisite page to the beautifullest of seas, regretful that I was not reading on board a felucca, lateen rigged. The French critic you quote who compared Sterne to one of the little bronze satyrs of antiquity, in whose hollow bodies exquisite odours were stored, seems to me to have wandered near to the truth, inasmuch that *The Sentimental Journey* recalls antiquity, perhaps more than any other book of the modern world. Like a translation of some small Latin or Greek work, it read to me, *Daphnis and Chloe*, or *The Golden Ass*, or which other, I ask, for I am without erudition, as many of the ancients were, but I have the eyes of the ancients, I think.

GOSSE. I should like to hear why *The Sentimental Journey* reminds you of classical literature. Just a feeling——

MOORE. A feeling, certainly, but no vague one; it is his sense of touch which never fails him, rather than his speech which often does, that carries my thoughts back to the flowers and leaves and garlands and pilasters and white butterflies of the city disinterred, only known to me through photographs and Mary Hunter's dining-room which came from Venice.

Italy never lost her paganism, and the disinterment of Pompeii was, in a sense, unnecessary. Italy never forgot her antiquity, nor could she forget it—her coasts washed on either side by the bluest of seas. And, as I said, I longed for felucca lateen rigged, for its half-dozen rough Italian sailors would not have seemed out of harmony with the fabled sea, the birthplace of all our beautiful European gods as the passengers were who, despite my admonitions, passed through the Straits of Messina, forgetful of Proserpine gathering flowers on the plain of Enna. I spoke to them of rugged Polyphemus peering over some cliffs and discerning Galatea in the foam, I besought them to remember Jupiter, who, disguised in the form of a bull, carried Europa away, and then, turning as a last resource to a more human story, I spoke of Dido weeping on the shores of the African coast.

GOSSE. Without enlisting any recruits?

MOORE. Nobody on board would listen.

GOSSE. Did you try to win the sympathies of the passengers with your theory that art is touch?

MOORE. Why not, Gosse? All audiences are good. I would sooner speak to Bishops than remain silent for six days. Of course, I tried to interest the passengers in the legends of the bluest and beautifullest of seas. I spoke of bitter Medea, Swinburne's best adjective, or one of his best.

GOSSE. So you refrained from entertaining the passengers with such literary discourse as I am enjoying now. Strange——

MOORE. It is strange, and much stranger than you would think for, to find oneself cut off from all communication with one's ideas, for on board the ship that took me there was nobody of my kin, nobody who knew me or my writings, or who had read any book that we have read, or seen any pictures that we have seen—a strange sense of estrangement that can be likened to an island and savages, with this difference, that the passengers and myself spoke the same language, but a language alienated from ideas avails us nothing, and you will appreciate my alarm when I tell you that the nearest thing to intellectual sympathy I could find on board that ship was a man who explained his invention for building piers out of concrete. It appears to have been successful somewhere in India. He was on his way thither to lay down more boxes of concrete, and his account of his invention interested me, for there was nothing else to listen to. *The Sentimental Journey* is not a long book, unfortunately. Only one other spoke to me; I've forgotten what his occupation in life was; but his ignorance is rememberable: what book are you reading? he asked one day. I answered him: *The Sentimental Journey*, and began to tell my surprise and delight in coming upon the famous phrase: God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. A phrase, I said, that many believe to be in the Gospels, for it sounds like Jesus. It isn't, nor is it Sterne's. He got it from a half-witted shepherdess, and does not give her French. The proverb seems to be forgotten in France; but Sterne's version started it on a new life in England. God tempers the wind is better than: God measures the wind, which may be the French turn of phrase. It was not, however, this improvement that gave the proverb immortality—but the substitution of lamb for yoe. A shepherdess would not be likely to speak of a shorn lamb. Without doubt it is the yoe that is shorn. I spell the word phonetically, Gosse, for I prefer the word as shepherds pronounce it. Sterne changes yoe into lamb, thereby bringing a little pathos into the proverb; and, we being a sentimental people, I was saying to the passenger when he interrupted me: do you really mean to tell me that he said God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb? Yes, I answered. Which shows, the passenger replied derisively, that he knows no more about lambs than he does about pheasants. A howler it was when he said that pheasants ate mangel wurzels; but this is a worse one; who ever heard of shorn lambs?

My absent-minded companion imagined that I was speaking of Lloyd George! It was Lloyd George, he thought, who said: God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and it seemed useless to point out his mistake to him.

Why, here's tea, Gosse; you'll have a cup with me?

Gosse. You've detained me already a long while, and my wife is expecting me with your message that you have kindly promised to come and entertain our visitors.

Moore. But, my dear friend, you promised to hear me out, and just as we arrive at the interesting part of the story, you say you must go, puzzling me rather than helping me, throwing a rope to a drowning man and withdrawing it before he reaches the bank. There are Johnson's *Rasselas* and Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* to speak about, but these works need not detain us long; neither is significant of the novel of family life that was preparing; *Rasselas* does not even hint at it, *The Vicar of Wakefield* only faintly. And the next writer of notoriety, if not of importance, is one of whom I know little, only some passages, and I shall be beholden to you for information regarding *Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle* and *Humphrey Clinker*, titles that do not make show of the poetic, serious literature we are in search of, presaging rather abundant horseplay and obscene jests.

Gosse. Smollett didn't avoid either. But have you never read Smollett?

Moore. To say that I have read him would be untrue, and to say that I have not read him would be nearly as untrue. My memory of him is gusto, and plenty of it, and an outlook on life in strict conformity with his style.

GOSSE. Smollett is no doubt a most unseemly writer, but in view of the influence he exercised and still exercises on the English novel I would have you consider him more carefully than you seem inclined to do, for Smollett was not only the translator of *Gil Blas*, but the master builder of this special kind of novel of adventure. It came to him from Spain, a country he says he had travelled and knew inside out and from end to end. I should be inclined to regard this as an over-statement, and to think that the spirit and form alike of Don Quixote escaped him. The picaresque novel——

MOORE. Before we go any further, will you tell me in what the picaresque novel consists?

GOSSE. I think I can define it. In the picaresque novel the reader is entertained by a quickly changing spectacle: scenes tacked together, it hardly matters how loosely, the object of the writer being to amuse the reader with what is passing before his eyes, regardless of what has happened before and what may happen afterwards. In one chapter we are in a thieves' kitchen, and in the next we are taken across the street to hear a young man paying court to a young woman, or to watch couples assembled for dancing, or to any other spectacle that may please the lively fancy of the author to exhibit for our pleasures. A thing that seems to me worthy of your attention is the passage of *Gil Blas* through France without leaving a trace on French literature, a point that criticism has very strangely passed over in silence or very nearly in silence, to influence our literature profoundly; and it would be interesting, so it seems to me, if you were to trace this influence all the way down the long road leading from Smollett to Dickens. It penetrated into Ireland. We find it in Lever and Lover, in *Handy Andy*, for instance.

MOORE. All you say moves me so deeply that I cannot fail to remember it, and my contribution to the criticism advised by you will be that what did happen might have been predicted. A great psychologist of races who was a great æsthetician as well would have been able to say: the French having a sense of synthesis will not be attracted to the picaresque novel, but the English being without this sense will be drawn to it like flies to a honeypot. How right I was to ask you to stay to tea, Gosse. And now, is there anybody between Smollett and Walter Scott worthy of our consideration?

GOSSE. Nobody of importance, none that may impede the flights of your fancy.

MOORE. Then I'll pick up the story of the novel where I left it; the Georgian house created a demand for the drawing-room entertainment, and Fielding fell in with the humour of our first drawing-rooms accidentally. He was followed by Johnson and Goldsmith, who wrote stories, hoping, of course, that their stories would please somebody; the desire of an audience does not imply willingness on the part of the author to write anything he thinks the public will buy; Smollett may have made a good deal of money by writing, but he wrote to please himself, I think —in the main, for literature had not yet become a trade.

GOSSE. It was Walter Scott that made it one.

MOORE. It doesn't surprise me. His name was always antipathetic to me; even in the days when my father read *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* aloud, I could not keep out of my mind the image of an amiable grocer, counting the jingling couplets off on fingers full of sand and sugar. My father knew the first two cantos practically by heart, and my mother long passages from *Marmion*, which she would repeat under the archway when we went to Castle Carra to picnic. It must have been the prices paid to Scott for poems that duped them. You mention in your *History of English Literature* that £1000 was paid for *The Lay of the Last Minstrel.*

GOSSE. And £4000 for *Marmion*. Abbotsford was no doubt a great sinning house till the crash came, but when it came you must not forget that Scott ceased to improvise novels to buy farms, as Carlyle charged him with doing. Henceforth his pen was dedicated to the payment of his debts.

MOORE. Thereby accepting the morality of the grocer as applicable to the artist, a thesis the absurdity of which I never fully appreciated till the other day, when a friend of mine withdrew his manuscripts from an agent who had put his wife aside to live with his clerk. The agent reproached the novelist with having done likewise. But the morality of the artist, said the novelist, is not to be confused with the morality of the agent. The agent, being the intermediary between the artist and the public, must be a man of irreproachable morals. Don't you see? Of course, the poor man saw, but the spell of Aphrodite was upon him.

GOSSE. Lo, the white implacable Aphrodite. But we're straying from the questions at issue.

MOORE. Only from Scott to the literary agent. Abbotsford! A literary agent would have rejoiced in the vocables! Abbotsford, Abbotsford! he would say, is a name to conjure with, and I can hear him in imagination muttering on the terrace: Sir Walter must have money to keep it up, and by a judicious management of the serial rights for New Zealand it can be done, and it must be done, for the public likes its author to live in towers. There were towers, Gosse, at Abbotsford, or Scott's literary agent would not have allowed him to take the place. I have forgotten the architecture, but there must have been towers, for nothing else but the upkeep of the towers could have compelled a man to continue rhyming the romantic page morning after morning.

GOSSE. But are you sure that, in speaking about Scott, you have not dropped into subterfuge, evasion, or—shall

I say it?—humour? I seem to miss in your criticism the fine, direct, simple thinking the absence of which in the English novel afflicts you. I would ask you, in your own interest, mind you, so that when you sit down to write your essay it shall be with a clear mind, embracing every aspect of your intricate and difficult subject, if some of what I believe to be a sincere aversion from Scott's poems and novels (I presume the novels fail to please you almost to the same extent as the poems) may not be attributed to Scott's attempt to live on literature as the barons of the Middle Ages lived upon forays.

MOORE. The works of our successful authors do not allow us to believe that they wrote to please themselves, and to do them justice they do not pretend that their works could interest anybody who is not more debased than themselves.

GOSSE. I am not certain that what you say is not true; but an inquiry would lead us far from the task in which we are engaged, nor should we ever arrive at any clear knowledge of the psychology of successful authorship through inquiry, for the authors we have in mind could not tell us even if they would. We can only know the successful author through our common humanity; and I am inclined to think that everybody writes to please himself, and that although the writer may know his books are not as good as the books on the shelves above him, he will continue to take pleasure in his own work with a sigh of regret perhaps that it isn't better. It is possible that you yourself heave a sigh after reading Landor's *Helen and Achilles;* but for that you do not destroy your manuscript, and, this being so, you should be able to put yourself in the position of the most inferior writer amongst us and understand that he, too, as much as Landor, writes as well as he can and takes pleasure in it.

MOORE. I believe you're right. I remember a friend in the old days saying to me: I know that I could not write like Ibsen, and I wouldn't if I could. He was a successful dramatist, who——

GOSSE. Who liked to please his public just as you like to please yours.

MOORE. You're a better psychologist than I imagined you to be, Gosse, and your last admonitions contain signs and traces of the mind that wrote *Father and Son.*

GOSSE. Every man writes what pleases him to write, and the choice is not given him to do otherwise. Scott could not breathe the pure air of Mount Ida—calm heights where the intellect sits enthroned.

MOORE. Amid snows unsoiled even by eagles' talons. Vocal sculpture over against marmoreal seas. But Landor could descend at will into the boudoir and be witty. You remember, no doubt, how delightfully the Duchesse de Fontanges talks to Bossuet, and will agree with me that Balzac has little to show as true, or Ingres anything more beautiful. And you remember her who gazes across melancholy Flemish lands dreaming her soul away in thoughts of one in Paris—thoughts that she herself is only faintly aware of. But I urge no fault. I was meditating on the beautiful things that few ever see or hear. Time can do nothing. Nor is it likely that Pater's and Landor's readers will increase; but there will always be a few. You know the prophecy, arriving early and staying late. All the same, the thought is a sad one that the next generation may be more concerned with my writings than with Landor's or Pater's, and merely because they are inferior. Ah, there is the sting.

GOSSE. Does your distress extend to my writings?

MOORE. No, Gosse, I hadn't thought of yours, but I am sure you would shed the last drop of your blood to make Landor and Pater known to the next generation.

GOSSE. I wonder if you would shed the first drop of yours? But we're wasting time.

MOORE. Wasting time! Are you, then, so eager to return to Scott, who never seems to have suffered from writer's cramp? It was my father's wont to tell that Scott wrote for three or four hours every morning, and spent the afternoons on horseback, a mode of life that seemed to me disgraceful, the romantic page requiring in my ten-year-old imagination all the poet's life, as the cocoon requires all the silkworm's. It was some years after that my dislike of forays and joustings suited to family reading was stirred up again by an engraving in which a benevolent grey-haired old gentleman sat under a purple curtain, pen in hand, not writing, nor thinking, for when a man thinks, his countenance empties, losing all expression. Scott was not thinking; there was little time for thinking; he was writing off his debts at the time, and had given an hour to a portrait painter; and his right hand held the grey goose quill, while his left hand caressed the head of an intrusive deerhound. I saw another portrait later, after my father's death, and my misgivings were increased by the insipid face that Raeburn discerned as the real author of *Ivanhoe*.

GOSSE. It might be as well to leave out deductions drawn from personal appearances. You've been painted a great many times, and I'm not certain that some of your portraits might not lead to unfavourable interpretations of the value of your own writings. We'll say no more on this point, but will return to the prose narratives. Of course, *Ivanhoe* was put into your hands, and you were bidden to read it.

MOORE. *Ivanhoe*, Burke's *Speeches*, Macaulay are enduring memories of an unhappy childhood. But I liked *The Bride of Lammermoor*. The romantic prediction:

> When the last heir to Ravenshood to Ravenshood shall ride
> To woo a dead maiden to be his bride,
> He shall stable his steed in the Kelpet's flow
> And his name shall be lost for evermo'.

finds an echo in most hearts (in every heart), for the note is a true note seldom struck though often sought; and Carlyle could not have been indifferent to its appeal, though he makes little of it, telling in his vindictive essay how, the romantic page being finished, Scott donned a green jerkin and mounted a palfrey and prepared to go away hunting; but one morning a pig could not be persuaded to leave the hounds, and Sir Walter had to intervene, and cracking his whip, to the amusement of his retainers he drove away the romantic porker. Carlyle's account of the episode amounts almost to assassination; it exceeds his fell and ferine account of Coleridge as the poet shuffled across the terrace muttering: subjective, objective. But you must not go, Gosse, till you've heard Mr Waverley in a love scene. I opened the book this morning.

GOSSE. And it opened at the page you are going to read to me. How very remarkable.

MOORE. Forgive me, Mr Waverley. I should incur my own heavy censure did I delay expressing my sincere conviction that I can never regard you otherwise than as a valued friend. I should do you the highest injustice did I conceal my sentiments for a moment—I see I distress you, and I grieve for it, but better now than later; and O! better a thousand times, Mr Waverley, that you should feel a present momentary disappointment than the long and heartsickening griefs which attend a rash and ill-assorted marriage!

Good God! But why should you anticipate such consequences from a union where birth is equal, where fortune is favourable, where, if I may venture to say so, the tastes are similar, where you allege no preference, where you even express a favourable opinion of him whom you reject?

Mr Waverley, I *have* that favourable opinion, and so strongly, that though I would rather have been silent upon the grounds of my resolutions, you shall command them, if you exact such a mark of my esteem and confidence.

I have often heard you lament, Gosse, the ineptitude of the female novel, but can you say, hand on your heart, that it is possible to discover in the serial story published in the servant girl's magazine a page more inept than that I have just read—more removed from human thought and feeling, more trite, calling up no image unless that of two sleek rotund inoffensive little animals, guinea-pigs, that—but I see I distress you.

GOSSE. It is not so much our opinions that divide us as our tempers—yours allows you to speak with studied disrespect of one who once occupied the highest position in literature to which a man can attain. You know that Balzac was a great admirer of Scott, and the fact makes the change that has come over public taste regarding the Waverley novels incomprehensible to me at least. I have listened to your reading a declaration of love that doubtless moved our grandfathers and grandmothers to tears, and heard your comment that it reminded you of nothing unless perhaps the almost mute and wholly unnecessary guinea-pig. And what aggravates my position is that I cannot say truthfully that I feel what you have read is not ridiculous.

MOORE. There are many more.

GOSSE. If you will allow me to continue a little while longer I will draw your attention to a matter about which you may find it convenient to speak in your essay, that though we admire Shelley's poetry we are unable to admire the poetry Shelley admired. He admired Byron, and I'm afraid that nobody will be able to explain to us how it was that Shelley's exquisite ear took pleasure in the versification of *The Bride of Abydos*, *Lara*, *The Corsair*, and *Childe Harold*. Shelley's admiration and Goethe's are incomprehensible unless we allow that Byron possessed qualities in 1820 that he does not possess in 1918. I admit that it is not easy to believe that texts must be regarded as *les petits vins du pays*, wines that lose their flavour after a certain number of years; but if we do not raise or lower poetry to the level of the wine list, how are we to explain the loss and gain? Whereas Byron has lost, Shakespeare has gained; like the fine wines of Bordeaux he seems to have gathered flavour and aroma, and is to-day a greater poet than he was in the Elizabethan days.

MOORE. Excellently well said, Gosse; we know that Shakespeare was rough on the palate in 1603, and that for more than fifty years Beaumont and Fletcher retained their supremacy.

GOSSE. After the Restoration they began to lose their fragrance, and have continued to lose it; and if some writers come down to us deteriorated, why should we find it hard to believe that others have gained? And, since change for better or worse is observable in all, is it certain that any writer is destined to be read as long as there are readers in England? The romantic movement swept Pope away, and no reputation was more securely established than his. Who shall say that another change will not sweep Wordsworth and Shelley out of popular favour?

MOORE. So you think, Gosse, there is no standard of taste, and that the mere caprice of a generation is accountable, whether it admires Scott or Balzac.

GOSSE. Do you think there is one?

MOORE. I think we find one in antiquity. Who can doubt that Virgil, Horace and Catullus would stare at us very blankly if we were to rouse them from their sleep to ask their opinion of *Quentin Durward?* And it requires no great effort of the imagination to discover the very words with which Apuleius would answer us. He would say: in my day there was a great deal of Christianity creeping about, and we did not think much of it; but we did not suspect it would lead you into an admiration of such dullness as Scott. But Apuleius and Longus, Virgil, Catullus, Horace and Homer, Sophocles and Aristophanes would take off their hats to Shakespeare. Every one of them would understand *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* and *Lear*. *The Tempest* would enchant them, and they would appreciate all our great prose writers—Landor, De Quincey, Pater. Why, therefore, should they fail to understand our narrative prose if there be any worth in it?

GOSSE. But do you think that an appeal to antiquity is altogether fair to Scott or to any modern writer?—Modern life being so different from ancient life. Do you think that Virgil would have understood Miss Austen?

MOORE. You have put an interesting question, for which I am obliged to you, and my answer will fall out naturally in the course of the conversation. *Pride and Prejudice* was published many years after it was written. How many?

GOSSE. Fourteen years, and you can reckon on her to support your contention that the literature that interests the next generation is not written for money.

MOORE. I have written my essay here and there, a manner of writing which I acquired from Pater through Symons. It seems to me that a better occasion couldn't occur for giving it a trial. . . . May I read to you what I have written—a few pages only?

GOSSE. I shall be delighted to listen.

MOORE. Scott's centenary must have fallen flat, for I remember nothing of it, but I have a very distinct memory of the articles that celebrated Miss Austen's. Praise there was in plenty, and if the writers of the articles could not discover the qualities that stirred their enthusiasm, it was because they were not themselves writers of prose narrative. It may be said that nobody understands anything so intimately as the craft he practises, and though the praise of the amateur is always welcome it is the criticism of the fellow-craftsman that counts. The praise was all right and very pleasing to me, who was nevertheless puzzled and unable to explain how the gentlemen could have written so much and said so little, the subject being Miss Austen, about whom so many interesting things might be said. I should not have wished them to omit the obvious that Miss Austen was a delightful writer who described the society of which she was part and parcel; it was necessary to say as much, of course, but it was not easy to see why this very trite appreciation should be expanded into many columns when so much remained unwritten about this delightful writer who, etc. After having mentioned for the tenth time that she described the society of which she was part and parcel, I should have liked the critics to have pointed out that Miss Austen was the inventor of a new medium of literary expression; it will no doubt come as a surprise to the critics to hear from me that Miss Austen was the inventor of the formula whereby domestic life may be described; and that every one of us, without exception. Balzac and Tourguéneff as much as Mrs Henry Wood and Anthony Trollope, is indebted to her.

GOSSE. A perfect blossom. Her craft——

MOORE (*reading*). A great deal has been written about her craft which we must allow to be good, and it is wonderful when we remember that she discovered it. Nor is it too much to say that she was her own potter, decorator, vintager, and that her jars were mostly well shapen, the painting witful and the wine excellent, without doubt the purest our island produces—a delicious wine, wholesome, palatable, one that can be drunk with pleasure by all, especially by men and women of letters, by whom it is especially recommended. Though divided on all other points, it seems we are united on this, and were not my rooms too small to contain the entire sodality, it would have pleased me to invite all here and put a certain matter to the vote—the only certain way of settling anything; but as that is impossible I have taken upon myself the responsibility of speaking in the name of the sodality; we are agreed, I say, that if the great dead were to reawaken, the Austen wine might be offered to Virgil, Catullus, Horace, Longus, Apuleius and Petronius Arbiter without fear that they would run to the window to puke, making wry faces.

It is many years since I have read *Pride and Prejudice*, but the two principal characters, Mr Collins and Elizabeth, are still clear to me. Mr and Mrs Bennett still keep a place in my recollection, and, unless my memory retains the good and forgets the false, this book tends towards the vase rather than the wash-tub, which is rare in English novels; but it will be safer for me to speak of *Sense and Sensibility*, which I read lately, for in that work it often seemed to me that Miss Austen is at her best and at her worst.

Her subject is what is known as County, and her narrative opens as it should open in a large commodious house situated in the middle of a part as far as possible from the high road. Miss Austen's intention in this book is to present a highly strung, romantic girl who believes the time for love is twenty or before, for at two-and-twenty young women have passed the bloom of youth. Marianne is, of course, certain that whosoever loves once can never love again. But in setting forth the mental attitude of her young people, it seems to me that Miss Austen falls into something like the sententiousness of Mr Waverley. She fails to see that the writing of a long exordium of common-sense is inadequate exposition, and that many pages would be needed to lead the reader into a gradual comprehension of the subject, that Elinor represents common-sense and Marianne romance. States of soul cannot be conveyed in speeches, and in speeches delivered by girls whose acquaintance we have only just made.

Of his sense and goodness, continued Elinor, no one can, I think, be in doubt who has seen him often enough to engage him in unreserved conversation. The excellence of his understanding and his principles can be concealed only by that shyness which too often keeps him silent. You know enough of him to do justice to his solid worth. But of his minuter propensities, as you call them, you have, from peculiar circumstances, been kept more ignorant than myself. He and I have been at times thrown a good deal together, while you have been wholly engrossed on the most affectionate principle by my mother. I have seen a great deal of him, have studied his sentiments, and heard his opinions on subjects of literature and taste; and upon the whole I venture to pronounce that his mind is well informed, his enjoyment of books extensively great, his imagination lively, his observation just and correct, and his taste delicate and pure. His abilities in every respect improve as much upon acquaintance as his manners and person. At first sight his address is certainly not striking, and his person can hardly be called handsome till the expression of his eyes, which are uncommonly good, and the general sweetness of his countenance is seen. At present I know him so well that I think him really handsome, or, at least, almost so. What say you, Marianne? I shall very soon think him handsome, Elinor, if I don't now. When you tell me to love him as a brother I shall no more see perfection in his face than I do now in his heart. Elinor then tried to explain the real state of the case to her sister. I don't attempt to deny, said she, that I think very highly of him, that I greatly esteem, that I like him. Marianne here burst forth with indignation:

Esteem him, like him, cold-hearted Elinor, oh, worse than cold-hearted, ashamed of being otherwise. Use those words again, and I'll leave the room this moment.

Elinor's resemblance to Mr Waverley in this speech is very striking, and I confess that I thought Miss Austen had succumbed to the influence of her time, and was about to put the book aside, but continued it, and fortunately, for as soon as the family reached Devon, I began to understand how the confused opening had come about: Miss Austen had found herself unable to resist the temptation to include a scene not, strictly speaking, in her subject—a grave fault with which we must, however, sympathise, the scene being one of the wittiest in literature: a dialogue between the heir, Mrs Dashwood's son, and his young wife, as to the amount Dashwood shall contribute to his mother and sisters' maintenance. The omission of this scene would have been a loss, but the book would have gained in shape, and if the pages occupied by the dialogue had been given over to an exposition of Elinor and Marianne's different mental attitudes Sense and Sensibility would have gained as a whole though it had lost something.

Dear, dear Northlands, Marianne asks; when shall I cease to regret you! When learn to feel at home elsewhere! Oh! Happy house, could you know what I suffer now in viewing you from this spot, from whence perhaps I may view you no more! And you, ye well-known trees! you will continue the same. No leaf will decay because we are removed, or any branch become motionless, though we can observe you no longer! No, you will continue the same, unconscious of the pleasure or the regret you occasion, and insensible of any change to those who walk under your shade! But who will remain to enjoy you?

This sententiousness—is it really sensibility?—is continued for about forty pages, and is not dropped until the sisters go with their mother to the Devonshire cottage, and our attention has relaxed considerably; but Miss

Austen regains it when a young man appears whom Marianne recognises as the one she has been craving for ever since her girlhood, and within a very few weeks she is convinced that he is the only one worth living for. At last the theme becomes clear, and we perceive that the author's intention is that Marianne shall be cheated of her desire, and marry in the end a man whose years once seemed to put him among those that can no longer hope to inspire passion. Passion alone is valid, so Marianne thinks, and we begin to comprehend the scheme, which is that the young man must break with her; it is essential to the story that he should, and the bringing about of the rupture, I said, will put the skill of the narrator to the finest test. The story will begin to creak in its joints if the greatest care be not taken. In about three weeks the young man expresses a desire to leave the neighbourhood, and the reason he gives for his return to London is not satisfactory; indeed, his manner alarms Marianne, and her disquiet is increased by many little incidents. So far so good, but the question has to be answered: is the author to take the reader into her confidence and tell that the young man has flirted with Marianne merely to pass the time away, his thoughts being fixed on a rich marriage, or is the author going to keep the secret from the reader, thereby appealing to that sense of curiosity which is in everyone? Strange as it may seem, Miss Austen chose to appeal to the curiosity of the reader, and we are well advanced in the novel before we hear that the young gentleman has succeeded in allying himself to money. The motive of curiosity seems to me to lie a little outside of her art, and it would have been better for her to have taken the reader into her confidence and told that the young man was seeking a rich marriage, and had no intention of applying his life to the worship of a poor girl; and later on Miss Austen's inexperience in her craft leads her into a blunder that cannot be condoned.

She brings back the young man after his marriage to tell Elinor that he is very sorry, and my heart failed me when I saw the scene rising up in the narrative, and prayed that it might not come to pass. But she was the first, a Giotto among women, and when she wrote there was no prose narrative for her to learn from. It is easier for us to avoid these mistakes. A writer of inferior talent—shall we say Maupassant?—would have known that the scene could not be written, for there are scenes in life that cannot be written, even if they can be proved to have happened. The writer must choose what can be written, and a worse exhibition of skill than this scene is not discoverable in literature. The young man apologised, blubbered, and went away, and with his disappearance from the book my fault-finding ends.

Remember that the theme of the book is a disappointment in love, and never was one better written, more poignant, more dramatic. We all know how terrible these disappointments are, and how they crush and break up life, for the moment reducing it to dust; the sufferer neither sees nor hears, but walks like a somnambulist through an empty world. So it is with Marianne, who cannot give up hope, and the Dashwoods go up to London in search of the young man; and every attempt is made to recapture him, and every effort wrings her heart. She hears of him, but never sees him, till at last she perceives him in a back room, and at once, her whole countenance blazing forth with a sudden delight, she would have moved towards him instantly had not her sister laid her hand on her arm, and in the page and a half that follows Miss Austen gives us all the agony of passion the human heart can feel; she was the first; and none has written the scene that we all desire to write as truthfully as she has; when Balzac and Tourguéneff rewrote it they wrote more elaborately, but their achievements are not greater. In Miss Austen the means are as simple as the result is amazing. Listen to it again. A young girl of twenty, jilted, comes up to London with her mother and sister, and she sees her lover at an assembly; he comes forward and addresses a few words more to her sister than to herself within hearing of a dozen people, and it is here that we find the burning human heart in English prose narrative for the first, and, alas, for the last time.

Miss Austen's imagination has not spent itself in this supreme scene. She can develop her motive, and the narrative is continued amid gossiping women coming and going into the house taken for the season; the drawing-room is never empty; in and out the visitors come and go, asking questions about Marianne's marriage. Each of these questions is like a burning knife thrust into the girl, and she has to keep a steady face upon it all. She has to bear with it all, listening to the chatter till she wishes herself dead, at all events in some silent world, and what is so admirable is that while the reader's heart is wrung with pity for the girl, he is amused by as good chatter as has ever been written, and a great deal of good chatter has been written by the great writers, for the power of writing chatter is the sign manual of the great writer. Perhaps the French word *boniment* will explain my meaning better; chatter, being an abstract word, does not express as much as *boniment.* The word *boniment* is associated with the showman, and the word recalls to our mind the rapid, almost incoherent, talk of the man who stands at the end of the booth, crying: walk up, walk up and see my show! Rabelais was a great master of patter, and next to him is Shakespeare. Balzac, too, could write good patter, but Mrs Jennings' patter in *Sense and Sensibility* is as good as any. She sometimes, it is true, includes an important statement in the patter, one that is necessary for the comprehension of the narrative, and this to me is a mistake, for the pleasure we find in patter is merely the pleasure of words run together rapidly.

You have not read *Sense and Sensibility* for a long while, Gosse, and will let me read some of Miss Austen's patter,

Well my dear, 'tis a true saying about an ill wind, for it will be all the better for Colonel Brandon. He will have her at last; ay, that he will. Mind me, now, if they ain't married by midsummer. Lord! how he'll chuckle over this news! I hope he will come to-night. It will be all to one a better match for your sister. Two thousand a year without debt or drawback—except the little love-child, indeed; ay, I had forgot her; but she may be 'prenticed out at a small cost, and then what does it signify? Delaford is a nice place, I can tell you; exactly what I call a nice old-fashioned place, full of comforts and conveniences; quite shut in with great garden walls that are covered with the best fruit trees in the country; and such a mulberry-tree in one corner! Lord! how Charlotte and I did stuff the only time we were there! Then there is a dovecote, some delightful stewponds, and a very pretty canal; and everything, in short, that one could wish for; and, moreover, it is close to the church, and only a quarter of a mile from the turnpike road, so 'tis never dull, for if you only go and sit up in an old yew arbour behind the house, you may see all the carraiges that pass along. Oh! 'tis a nice place! A butcher's hard by in the village, and the parsonage-house within a stone's throw. To my fancy, a thousand times prettier than Barton Park, where they are forced to send three miles for their meat, and have not a nearer neighbour than your mother. Well, I should spirit up the Colonel as soon as I can. One shoulder of mutton, you know, drives another down. If we *can* but put Willoughby out of her head!

CHAPTER 2.

MAID. Mr George Moore.

GOSSE. My dear Moore, how unexpected and how delightful.

MOORE. It is pleasant to hear you say so for, truth to tell, I was not quite sure that I should be welcome on a day not set apart for visitors. But since I am so fortunate I will admit that I am glad to catch you in your wont, passing your time on your great balcony, as large as a parlour, reading, a shawl wrapped about your knees.

GOSSE. You know the proverb: whether May come early or late, 'tis sure to make the old cow quake.

MOORE. I like these homely proverbs, and as I cannot be among our lanes and downs I come to Regent's Park, so typical of the London of our generation, and to your house, typical of our ideas. All the way up the stairs it breathes the delightful seventies: Rossetti, Madox Brown and the residue. You were associated with the Pre-Raphaelites.

GOSSE. Associated with them in the poetical movement of the seventies, and my wife, who was a painter, knew them all, even that remote one who died last year.

MOORE. And before you met the Pre-Raphaelite movement you were a Plymouth Brother, another instinct of the English mind. I would be as English as you, Gosse, but to be you I should have to renounce a great deal—the Nouvelle Athenès. It was in one of my adventures from that café to London that I brought my youthful drama in blank verse, *Martin Luther*, to a house overlooking a canal, with a screen of poplar-trees between it and the barges. But Delamere Terrace is almost forgotten, and I can only think of you here in Regent's Park, though my instinct tells me that it was not you but your wife and daughters who discovered this Georgian house. You owe a great deal to your wife and daughters. You will never know how much unless you survive them, which—but the conversation has taken a turn too gloomy for this wide balcony, overlooking the park. Did you notice that breeze, lilac-laden? In a few days it will bring the odour of hawthorn. But what book are you reading?

GOSSE. Lamb's *Essays*.

MOORE. You know them always, but Lamb was no more than a name to me until I found his book in my secretary's hand and took it from her; and could do no writing that morning.

GOSSE. So you mentioned once before, but despite your admiration you did not pursue your new acquaintance into his correspondence, as I begged you to do.

MOORE. We must allow many good dishes to pass by if we would taste of a few fully.

GOSSE. A frail excuse.

MOORE. A second is not lacking. I would not risk blurring the impression the essays have made; you tell me the correspondence will but increase it; but there is no need at present for increase, nor possibility, for did I not say to myself, and not later than yesterday: no literature has a Lamb like ours, not even Greek, adding whimsically: not till it became canine. You do not understand? You should, for the variant is Swinburne; with an additional turn given to it. What, not yet? Is there not a lamb in New Testament? Now you've got it, and we can return to Lamb, who appears in your history as the author of a pastoral, *Rosamond Grey*. The work came upon me with something of a shock, and I am still trying to associate him with Corydon, Amaryllis, Sylvander and Rosalind, trying to see him among the downs, in a glade, but in my imagination he remains always in Fountain Court. You would have done well to have held your tongue about that pastoral. But his association, however brief it may have been, with shepherds and sheep, brings us back easily to our own sheep, or, to be still more exact, my dear Gosse, to your own yoe lamb—that English genius expressed itself so fully in poetry that very little was left over to sustain and dignify the other arts. It would cost Sidney Colvin a sleepless night were he to hear us, for he thinks that Stevenson did not fall to his real job in life till he began to write stories in Samoa.

Gosse. I don't think that Colvin would allow that Stevenson was ever unaware of the direction in which Stevenson's genius lay, not even in those early years when Stevenson reminded me of some wonderful butterfly hovering over every blossom, but never able to choose which flower he should woo; as capricious as a butterfly, but without the instinct. He busied himself in turns with verse-writing and drama; he was not certain that biography did not attract him, and he read Hazlitt and studied the strategy of the Duke of Wellington. The Duke was even advertised for publication, but he was abandoned—both the Duke and Hazlitt. And soon after his thoughts turned to Scottish history, but finding no subject that pleased him he determined to stand for the Edinburgh professorship of literature. And you know that he proposed to me that we should rewrite in conjunction the picturesque murder cases.

Moore. His inveterate bad health must have shattered his literary instinct if he had one.

Gosse. It is hard to imagine him with a good constitution, and I am not certain that bad health was not part of his genius, which, it must be confessed, often seems not a little hectic and feverish.

Moore. I think I can foresee the career of a fairly healthy Stevenson: endless travelling in search of adventures; Tibet, China and Japan, Arabia, furnishing in turn the mental stimulus that he required. If Nature had given him health we should have had the most wonderful tales of travel ever written, interspersed with the quaintest character sketches. But good health would not have given him what he did not bring into the world—a sympathetic mind. He was an eye-man, a wanderer, an Autolycus, picking up halfpence and with exquisite craft turning them into guineas.

GOSSE. A superior kind of Loti.

MOORE. So superior that no comparison is possible.

GOSSE. In this much I agree with you that he never really found—if you will allow me two words of French, *son cadre.*

MOORE. Sidney Colvin pushed him into the task of evolving stories out of an inner entity that did not exist. And it is all so plain that I am surprised that criticism is still at wrangle about him. Are not his letters those of a man who could not write stories? He had all the literary gifts, but one drop of story poisoned the lump.

GOSSE. I think I can tell you why he failed to write stories; he had little power to heighten the interest with anecdotes, and——

MOORE. A very good point that is of yours, Gosse, better perhaps than you think, for the real gift of the tale-teller lies in the power to excite and illuminate by means of anecdote. Balzac——

GOSSE. Balzac's invention was always prompt. But I was going to give another reason for the dryness of Stevenson's stories: the absence of his own enchanting presence from them, one that I shall never forget, else I should have stopped you before, for if you do not propose to carry this discussion into our own time, I think we had better turn our attention to Disraeli and Lytton.

MOORE. Lytton's novels were among the first I read, and *The Last of the Barons* came to me highly recommended by my companions in whooping-cough. As you may remember, whooping-cough allows nothing to stay on the stomach; one is obliged to fly from the room constantly, and every time I returned I came upon people and events in the story that I could not connect with those I had left a few moments before. But my companions said it was a great story, and I read on day after day, understanding nothing of what I was reading, dreading questions and expecting them, for it had begun to seem to me that I was being watched. So you've finished the book? said one. Did you enjoy the story? Very much, I replied. Which part did you like the best? another asked. It was all very good, I answered; and all that day the laughers did not cease to tease me (how little the word tease expresses the agony those pin-pricks caused, so soft, so tender, so susceptible to pain are we in childhood) till, wearied of teasing, maybe, or thinking my skin had hardened and could be pierced no longer, they became curious to hear how I would take the news that every time I left the room my marker was advanced some twenty or thirty pages.

GOSSE. Now that we have got the literary history of your whooping-cough, it will be interesting to proceed into that of your measles; you had the measles, if not the chicken-pox, and must have read many books during your convalescence. Proceed by all means; let us have the complete history of your development.

MOORE. I'm afraid I'm becoming a bore, Gosse, and had better bid you good-bye, thanking you, of course, for your kindness in listening.

GOSSE. You are not a protagonist of humour in the novel, but you would not root it out of life. Sit down. You read *The Last Days of Pompeii*, and were captured, as we all were, by Glaucus, who behaved very decorously towards a blind girl.

MOORE. I owe to Pelham a certain whimsicality of mind that the years have never rubbed away, and I believe the tone of the book to have influenced thousands. Pelham is walking one day with a friend, who begs him suddenly to cross the roadway, saying he cannot bring himself to speak or even to recognise as an acquaintance a man whom he had just caught sight of coming towards them, and on looking up to see who it is that causes so much aversion, Pelham sees a man that everybody in London would like to be seen talking to. Why do you not wish to speak to him? Pelham asks, and as soon as they are safely on the other side of the street the friend answers: the man you saw coming towards us dined with me last week, and on my apologising to him for an unaccountable oversight on the part of my cook, who substituted ordinary vinegar for Chile with the turbot, replied that he did not know the difference between one vinegar and another. I feel that I have missed the end of Lytton's sentence, but the beginning you can take as being quoted correctly. But why should blame fall on the cook? Pelham's friend should have apologised for his butler's mistake. Turbot is not boiled in vinegar, and the passage exhibits Lytton as a sciolist rather than as an adept in the art of living, a man of letters aping a man of fashion, and doing it fairly well, but only fairly. At fifteen one overlooks detail, and Pelham's friend was clearly one to be imitated, an exemplar that, methinks, has found many noisy adherents in our own time, every one of whom would be hurt and shocked to find himself traced to such a humble origin as Lytton.

MOORE. But are not all origins humble? Every one of us begins in bad taste and most men remain in it.

GOSSE. Nobody had greater successes with the public than Lytton. Every book he wrote was a success; some of course, were more successful than others, but all were successes.

MOORE. Another book of his roused my imagination, and in much the same way as Pelham, *The Parisians*. Lytton's death interrupted the story whilst a party of friends in the beleaguered city were about to dine off a pet dog whose master had endured hunger as long as he could, sharing his crusts with Fox, but at last it became apparent that if Fox were not eaten at once he would not be worth eating later.

Gosse. Was Fox killed before the story stopped?

Moore. I've forgotten, but the meal was not described, which is a pity, for Lytton's talent revealed itself in such scenes of comedy rather than in discourses on truth and beauty. Another great event of my youth, and of yours too, Gosse, I'm sure, was *Money*, at the Old Prince of Wales' Theatre, when the Bancrofts owned it. Do you remember Coghlan and Miss Foote in the act in which the will is read, as good an act of comedy as ever was written if it resembles my memory of it. If you have forgotten it I never have, nor a certain short front scene, played by George Honey and his wife. The theatre never interested you; but there was a Lamb in me; and if I had been taken round after a performance of *Money* and introduced to Lytton I should have fallen on my knees.

Gosse. Then it's lucky you weren't, for the memory would have been disagreeable. Have you no memory of Disraeli?

Moore. None. My father asked me to read *Vivian Grey*, but it left no impression on my mind, perhaps because he asked me to read it; and my memory of the unendurable silliness of Henrietta Temple prevented me from reading *Lothair*, though there were many in the Nouvelle Athènes who wished to hear what I thought of *Lothair*. There are so many wonderful books to read, I answered Villiers—Villiers de l'Île Adam. Are there? his troubled eyes seemed to ask, and I added: there is your *Eve*. La nouvelle édition est épuisée, on m'a dit hier de passer à la caisse. Enfin, si après tout la chance est venue à moi; and sweeping a lock of hair from his face he repeated: si après tout la chance est venue à moi. Villiers's unhappy eyes haunt me as none others do, and the memory of them is very dear to me. You have similar memories, Gosse. You remember the great men you met in Denmark and Norway. The poet warns us to gather our memories while we may; he should have added: for the time will come when memories will seem like hips and haws, hardly worth gathering. The feminine trouble is the first to disappear; we are glad in our folly, and afterwards regret it, for we are now altogether without appointments except those we make with our publishers; a forlorn twain surely, having read too much and seen too many pictures, and though the world's shows amuse us still we are weary of them and perhaps a little of ourselves.

GOSSE. If you are a little weary of yourself it is because you have lost the habit of reading; if you read it is to get something from the book, rather than for the book itself; and if I may hazard a very personal criticism of your life, I should say that you never cared for painting or music or literature, but used them as a means of self-development.

MOORE. Even though what you say be true, am I different from anybody else? Can we care for anything except as we care for food and drink? But I agree with you, Gosse, in this much, that I have invested too much in art. You have been wiser or more fortunate in the conduct of your life. You do not stand alone; there are your wife, your daughters, your son and little grandchild. This solid Georgian house is charged with memories of your life and theirs. You have nothing to complain of, Gosse; a very fortunate man you have been in your literature, in your wife and children. The House of Lords fell into your lap at the right moment, when you began to tire of writing articles for necessary money. And with the House of Lords came other windfalls. Indeed the only ill luck that I can remember is when the age-limit obliged you to leave the Lords. Even that retirement was not an unmixed bitterness, for it did not come before you left behind you a permanent memory. You are still the literary force behind the House. It has begun to write, and every lord that writes is your debtor for an article. And so are we, Gosse. We too are indebted to the lords for many pages of pure, beautiful English prose; if not music-makers themselves, the the lords are at least the reeds through which music is blown.

GOSSE. It is indeed a pleasure to me to hear that my prose has pleased you. But you do not think that I write these articles merely because the books I review were written by lords?

MOORE. Good heavens, Gosse, such a thought never crossed my mind. Who could defend the lords as well as their own librarian? Who should defend them if he refrained? Who has a right to defend them better than he?

GOSSE. I never put it to myself in that way before, but I see now that I must have always felt that their old librarian still owed them his service.

MOORE. Service does not comprehend the whole of your sympathy. You look back on the House of Lords as I do on the Nouvelle Athènes; on stepping over the two thresholds we seemed to step into our true selves, at least, I did; and you can judge if I am not to-day as distinctively *un nouvel Athênien* as I was when I brought you *Martin Luther*.

GOSSE. It is nice of you to speak like this, for sometimes it has crossed my mind that my attitude to the lords might be misunderstood. But you understand me so well that perhaps others too understand better than I thought for.

MOORE. Thank you, Gosse. I do not think that anyone seriously misunderstands, but it may be that my almost excessive interest in human conduct has enabled me to see farther into the lives of others than the average man.

Gosse. As we are on the subject, I may say to you that my connection with the House of Lords has been useful in many ways that perhaps you do not know of. It has opened up libraries to me that I should never have seen, certainly never have known in detail if I had not been privileged. It was only the other day I was staying at Loughton Hall. The late earl wrote some charming poetry; you are not interested in the byways of literature, but I am; and besides writing a good deal of poetry, which, in my humble opinion, is not without value, he was a great book collector. His libraries were among the richest in the United Kingdom; in erotic literature they were certainly the very richest, for his passion for collecting that class of book which appears in the catalogues as curious knew no abatement. It is even said, with what truth I cannot determine (it may be no more than evil gossip), that after carrying away his quarry he carefully instigated prosecutions against the dealers who had supplied them, with a view to increasing the value of his own purchases. At his death this collection caused the family great embarrassment, for it was impossible to sell them in England, and books are not easily destroyed; a large fire, stimulated with paraffin, might have reduced them to ashes, but a large fire in the stable yard, and I know nowhere else it could have taken place, would have caused inquiries to be set on foot. So it was decided that no better thing could be done with them than to send the books, which were of great value, to Belgium, to be disposed off in Brussels.

Moore. I hope that the money they fetched was devoted to charitable purposes. A foundling hospital might have been endowed.

Gosse. You are thinking of the orphanage in Ibsen's play of *Ghosts*. A piece of symbolism of which I never wholly approved, William Archer even less than I. But about these books. I was at Loughton Hall last week, and on looking through the library, to which I went at once, I came upon an old catalogue that should have been burnt, for it contained titles of many of the books that were sold in Brussels, and among them was this one, *Les Arcanes de l'Amour*. The book had disappeared, but I copied the title and description of the contents from the catalogue.

CHRONIQUES ESTRANGÈRES
RELATIVES AUX ARMES SECRÈTES
DE L'AMOUR
ÉPERONS ET BOUCLIERS
FEINTES ET STRATAGÈMES
CHARMES, PHYLTRES ET ONGUENTS
CONDUITES ET ORDONNANCES
POUR TOUS RITES ET DIVERTISSEMENTS

SE VEND À L'ENSEIGNE DE LA LICORNE PROCHE LE PALAIS
LA HAYE
MDCCLXV

GOSSE. The words are simple enough, and it seems to me that I can feel my way safely though the implicated currents of suggestion in the first lines, but when I come to the last: conduites et ordonnances pour tous rites et divertissements, I seem to miss the connection with what has gone before; lovers seek the hidden way surely; my lack of knowledge of French life is no doubt to blame, and I shall be curious to hear you expatiate in all the odd ambiguities of the advertisement till it reads—well, like a page of George Ohnet.

MOORE. You have heard of the Duke of Brunswick, the one that lived in Geneva and died in the sixties. You cannot have missed hearing of him. I'm sure it was in the sixties he died, for it was in the seventies that Suzanne

Lattés used to tell me about him when she lived on the entresol, 7 Rue de Chateaubriand. He left her a big slice of his fortune, but the town of Geneva disputed the will. Poor Suzanne! Litigation, endless litigation. I don't know if she got her money in the end, which she earned, as you shall hear, with her voice, a beautiful alto going down to A, three notes below the middle C.

Gosse. But can ambiguities of the advertisement be explained through the register of Suzanne's voice?

Moore. I think it can, else I should not have spoken of Suzanne; a delicate, finely moulded woman, which is rare in a contralto.

Gosse. Was the Duke a musician?

Moore. In a meaure, but only a single composition of his has come down to us, *un divertissement* sung habitually on Sunday night by his Grace's choir, the Duke walking round his drawing-room attired in peacocks' feathers, exciting the wonder of the ladies-in-waiting, numbering twenty-four, all seated round the room in ballroom attire, the trebles on the right, the altos on the left. A mere byway of literature and music inspired by Suzanne's voice, it is true, but one which I think would be interesting to make known to the public if Suzanne were here. We were going to Italy together. I was crazy to hear her sing in Italy. She led off on the middle C: Oh le beau coq, the trebles answering her on the G, a fifth higher; the altos repeating the phrase from the fifth with a little more emphasis, which naturally brought in the trebles, another fifth higher, of course; and on the words: voyez comme il traîne son aile. At this the altos would be encouraged to raise their voices on the words: en état d'enfiler; the trebles answering: une de nous, starting higher, and that is as much as I remember of the Duke's composition. One moment. As this was rather a strain on the ladies' voices, the piccolos came to the rescue and carried the musical phrase into the next octave, leaving the ladies repeating the word: laquelle? laquelle? at the top of their voices.

GOSSE. How very extraordinary! Can you discover no more of the ode? a veritable byway of literature it certainly is.

MOORE. I daresay I might recall a few lines; the ladies' names will help me: Blanche, Madeleine, Carmen, Manon:

> Oh le beau coq! voyez comme il traîne son aile
> En état d'enfiler une de nous: laquelle?
> Désire-t-il un sein! rêve-il un mollet?
> Blanche montre ton cul, il est blanc, comme lait.
> Madeleine est exquise, Alice ouvre ta bouche;
> Ta langue est maraudeuse autant que guêpe ou mouche.
> Dans les palais bâtis au delè de nos cieux
> Le nombril de Carmen humanise les dieux.
> Mais le duc très friand ne veut choisir encore.
> Il quitte Élisabeth et sans regarder Laure
> Poursuit son rêve

and in verses that I cannot recall at this moment, the choir despairs.

GOSSE. But why does the choir despair?

MOORE. For that it fails to instigate a whimsy in ducal blood. But as he prepares to depart Suzanne's voice is heard, disconsolate, calling to Manon:

> Et que ta voix, Manon, excite notre duc
> A passer parmi nous plein d'un illustre suc,
> Déplumé tout à fait, nu comme un ver der terre
> Sauf la plume de paon qui lui pend au derrière.

I've forgotten if the shrilling of the piccolos at last succeeded in stimulating the Duke to make a choice, but if he made none, a tripping measure was substituted and the ladies danced round the Duke, plucking him slowly, and when the last feather was gathered, the doors were flung open: Monsieur le duc est servi.

GOSSE. How very extraordinary.

MOORE. I think that I remember the lines that eluded my memory a while ago:

Il quitte Élisabeth et sans regarder Laure
Poursuit son rêve obstinément—rêve d'amour,
Car le côté jardin et puis le côté cour
D'une jeune Irlandaise enfle sa chair avide
De la très jeune chair. La nature hait le vide
Et——

Gosse. One moment. We shall be more comfortable when the drawing-room window is shut. That is better. We were talking of a little volume, *Les Arcanes de l'Amour;* sold, no doubt, with the rest of the collection in Brussels.

Moore. And no doubt it now holds an honoured place in an American millionaire's private library.

Gosse. It was the truly Gallic imagination displayed in the advertisement that caught my fancy, and after the pleasant *divertissement* it has afforded us, do you not think we had better return to Lytton and Disraeli.

You will remember that in my *History of English Literature*—you have given so many proofs of your attentive reading of it that perhaps you do remember that I place Disraeli higher than Lytton; you, it would seem, take an opposite view; but we will not waste words on our differences of opinion regarding the relative value of a mercenary literature, novels that served to pay the election expenses of their authors, and now exemplify your theory that the English novel was never anything more than a commercial transaction between author and publisher. On this point we are in cordial agreement, and I will add that Disraeli, knowing his literary talent was no more than a showy facility in the handling of words, an essentially Jewish talent, was glad to place the whole of it at the service of politics, whereas Lytton, believing himself to be a great man of letters, gave ear to the tempter, and sold, not his whole soul, but half of it, which is always a bad speculation, for half a soul is of no use to God or man.

Moore. My faith is plighted to your psychology that every man writes as well as he can, a mournful truth indeed, for the rogue is more interesting than the dupe. This much, however, may be said in favour of Lytton and Disraeli, that they succeed in amusing many more than we do, or ever shall. You have no doubt asked yourself very often if it were not better to amuse the multitude than to deserve the passing respect of the few: for all passes but Shakespeare and the Bible, and we in our midnight communings ask ourselves if it be not better to range with humble livers in content than to seek the grand style, for whosoever seeks it is driven into suicide. Haydon sought it and was propelled towards a basin, with a razor in his hand. And there is a potential Benjamin Haydon in every one of us, minus the noble soul that found a Calvary on Parnassus from the evening he went to Park Lane to consult the Elgin Marbles for information regarding the drawing of a foot.

Gosse. I know nothing more heartbreaking than his description of his mother's death, nothing in Balzac, nothing in Tourguéneff, and it may be that a great man of letters was lost in a bad painter.

Moore. If he had laid aside the palette for the pen he would have sought the grand style in literature. A noble soul despite his failure . . . But what am I saying? It was through his failure that we learnt to know him. You who love byways should read his autobiography. You overlooked him; worse still, you overlooked Borrow.

Gosse. As you say, I overlooked Borrow. *Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.*

Moore. I'm glad to hear that you repent an omission which is a grave one, but I must not take credit for unselfish reading; my discovery was made while reading for information rather than for pleasure; I had forgotten Borrow's birth and death, and finding you had overlooked him, I had recourse to my friends, and learnt from them that Borrow was a contemporary of Scott. A century at least should divide them, I said, and I fell to thinking of one writing *The Bible in Spain*, his eye always on the object, thinking only how he might discover every voice and aspect of Spain in English prose, and the other improvising novels to buy farms. Borrow is an integral part of my subject, I said, for now I come to consider it, like Sterne, he saved his talent by refraining from story-telling.

GOSSE. But he did write stories: *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye*.

MOORE. These admirable books have always been looked upon as biographies into which Borrow introduced many imaginary anecdotes; and it seems worth while to point out that the strange mixture of fact and fiction which has caused so much wonderment among his admirers was imposed upon Borrow by the very nature of his talent, too great to permit him to write a literature of oiled ringlets and perfumery, and not great enough to allow him to create outside of his own observation and knowledge, in other words, to evoke human souls out of his instinctive knowledge of how human life is made.

GOSSE. We had an interesting talk on that subject not very many days ago, you maintaining that Serge Aksakoff was not the principal character, but Serge's father, whereas I looked upon the narrator as the chief character. But I can see now that I was wrong, for Serge does not attempt to narrate himself like Rousseau; he is less in his narrative than Borrow is in *Lavengro*.

MOORE. Much less than Borrow is in *Lavengro*, a mere mouthpiece. But Borrow is a masked man, whose identity we would pierce and who excites our wonderment as he goes by, summoning his world into being like Goya. A very Goya before he saw Spain, in Ireland; for what is more like Goya than the old woman whom he found groaning over a straw fire in a ruined castle somewhere near Clonmel, and the man Borrow met hunting hare with hound in the bog as he returns home? I know no book that I would as soon read again as *The Bible in Spain*. Landscape after landscape, and Goya and his people everywhere. Is there not somewhere in the book a dwarf who turns somersaults in front of Borrow's horse, or did I invent it? I was grieved when he parted with his horse, and did not forget the noble animal till we reached a conversation with an Archbishop. You want permission to sell the Gospels without notes or commentaries? the Archbishop asks. Borrow admits that that is the permission he is applying for, but gathering from the Archbishop's manner that the permission he seeks will not be granted, he observes the prelate's ring.

GOSSE. And what a delightful little conversation springs up regarding the purity of the gem. . . . Of what are you thinking?

MOORE. I beg your pardon, Gosse, for my absent-mindedness, it was only a moment ago that I was contrasting Borrow with Goya, and now I am thinking that, unlike Goya, he left us no portraits of women as he should have done, for he was a bachelor till he was nearly forty; and it is the bachelor who tells us the feminine soul truthfully. The only exception to the rule that I can think of is Borrow, whose books are stamped with an indifference to women. Yes, Gosse, it is so; if there were no bachelors we should know nothing of women.

GOSSE. You are thinking of Balzac, who was a bachelor till the last six months of his life, and the choice his works afford of feminine portraiture is a wide one, from Eugénie Grandet to Seraphita.

MOORE. And now another thought has come to me: that it was Miss Austen's spinsterhood that allowed her to discover the Venusberg in the modern drawing-room.

GOSSE. I'm afraid I miss your point.

MOORE. We do not go into society for the pleasure of conversation, but for the pleasure of sex, direct or indirect. Everything is arranged for this end: the dresses, the dances, the food, the wine, the music! Of this truth we are all conscious now, but should we have discovered it without Miss Austen's help? It was certainly she who perceived it, and her books are permeated with it, just as Wordsworth's poems are with a sense of deity in nature; and is it not this deep instinctive knowledge that makes her drawing-rooms seem more real than anybody else's? Marianne loves beyond Juliet's or Isolde's power; and our wonder at her passion is heightened by the fact that it wears out in drawing-rooms among chaperons; the book falls on our knee, and we murmur, as we look through the silence: how simple the means and how amazing the result. A good deal of what I am saying here is repetition come over from our last conversation, provoked by Borrow, in whose books the drawing-room never appears. He rode past the Venusberg without seeing it, without hearing it, and we find ourselves in a work-a-day world of gipsies and prize fighters, horse dealer and horse thieves, odds and oddments of all sorts and kinds. Borrow is never at a loss for a queer turn of mind, and the dealer in Chinese porcelain who is inspired by the writing on the cups and saucers to learn Chinese is never far from my thoughts. Another equally interesting anecdote eludes my thinking for the moment. It will come back presently. In *Wild Wales* we are in a real country filled with real people, and Borrow enchants us with his talks with the wayfarers as he walks through the hills, having conveniently left his wife and daughter behind. Numerous are his characters as are the people that come and go through the pages of the Bible.

GOSSE. How he enjoys his beer, and how the quality of the beer fixes a certain picturesque site in his memory. And of the truth of this to nature I can vouch, having wandered into Wales for the purpose of verifying the accuracy of Borrow's observation, for I too remember a certain town by the excellence of the glass of beer I drank in its inn.

MOORE. What was the name of that Welsh town?

GOSSE. It is unkind of you to ask me these questions. You know that my unfortunate memory retains few names and dates. But here is something you may not have thought of; the almost Dutch seriousness which we notice in Borrow may have come to him from Holland. He was a Norfolk man, and Norfolk more than anywhere else is impregnated with Dutch influence, especially during Borrow's century. He was born in the eighteenth; I should say he was a contemporary of Sir Walter Scott, as your friends told you, and as your thesis, or a great part of it, is that literature written for money is worthless from an æsthetic point of view, and from every point of view in a few years, I think that Borrow is the illustration you require. All his books, with one exception, were failures, commercial failures, with the exception of *The Bible in Spain*, and it was not the literary merits of *The Bible in Spain* that caused it to be read. It was read for the sake of the propaganda; if it had been less well written it would probably have been still more widely read. And if you care to emphasise your paradox that a man's name directs the course of his life, you can say that George Borrow is a name that would be approved by his admirers if his books had come to us anonymously. You will be safe in saying as much, for the name is plain, straightforward, without subterfuge or evasion, in perfect agreement with the man's literary style and his wont. I can hear you call it an honest English name, one that began with the race, to endure for all time, like our homesteads, etc. You will be able to fill up the category of qualities that the name evokes better than I.

MOORE. The name seems to me (like the books he wrote) to represent one side of the man's character vividly enough, but there must have been another side, and one that played a large part in the comedy of his life, else he would not have troubled to keep it out of sight so completely. I am conscious of a desire springing in me to talk for an hour on the extraordinary variety of characters and conversations in that great book, *The Bible in Spain*; but we must hasten from Spain to meet three sisters from a parsonage over against a Yorkshire heath, for their literary fortunes draw into the arena of this discussion an interesting question: how far the circumstances of an artist's life contribute to get recognition for his work.

GOSSE. Byron was largely conscious that his literary reputation depended on his acts rather than on his words.

MOORE. But, Gosse, isn't that always so?

GOSSE. Shakespeare and the Brontës.

MOORE. Had Shakespeare trailed a pike in the Low Countries—a phrase beloved of Shakespearean critics—his contemporaries would have appreciated him. The Brontës had silhouette thrust upon them; and on looking into *Jane Eyre*, after fifty years of absence, I have to confess my inability to discover the qualities that compelled you and Swinburne to write of it as if it were a masterpiece. In speaking of *Wuthering Heights* you were a little more careful, you glided swiftly, but in writing of *Jane Eyre* you spoke of—I have your exact words: a sweep of tragic passion and the fusion of romantic intrigue with grave and sinister landscape—and will you deny that this is the kind of phrase that the pen drops when we yield to public opinion?

GOSSE. I am glad, flattered, that my *History of English Literature* was of use to you, but I may remark that it was intended primarily for the general reader.

MOORE. I have no difficulty in understanding that you tried to keep purely personal opinions out of your book, judging, and judging wisely, that these would merely puzzle and embarrass the reader you had in your mind.

Jane Eyre was praised by the best informed when you wrote, and it is to your credit that you were not deceived by the literary babble of the time, nor driven to flouting public opinion, as you might well have been, but, with your usual tact, judged neither the place nor the moment to be propitious, and refrained. But now that the Brontë epidemic is over may I not seek to discover what your personal opinion——

GOSSE. You can ask me any question.

MOORE. I prefer not to ask any, but to tell you the story of *Jane Eyre.*

GOSSE. But what is a book divested of its words?

MOORE. As much as a man is when divested of his flesh.

A widower with one daughter engages Jane Eyre as governess, and it is not very long before Jane begins to notice that Mr Rochester pays her attentions. Rochester's attentions become more and more marked, and the marriage into which Rochester nearly succeeded in inveigling Jane is stopped in the church at the very altar by his mad wife's relations. It can hardly be doubted that Charlotte Brontë would have preferred Rochester to have said: Jane, my wife is a maniac and lives in the distant wing. But if you like to live with me I will try to make you happy. I should not altogether like the bargain, for the parties are not bargaining on equal terms, one is a governess and the other a man of wealth and position. But there can be no question that from a moral as well as from a literary point of view it would be preferable to bigamy. What happens next? I have forgotten.

GOSSE. Jane returns from the church to the Hall, and I think I can aver that Mr Rochester is at once accepted as a penitent, a penitent inasmuch as he regrets his design to inveigle his governess into a sham marriage, and I think he confesses that it would have been wiser to propose that Jane should live with him outside of marriage. And

Jane might have accepted him on these terms if she had not been deceived by Rochester in the first instance, but having just escaped a sham marriage, she feels she cannot remain at the Hall, and runs away, without clothes or money.

MOORE. Doesn't she wander in the country any whither no whither, to take refuge at last with Parson, with whose help the story is somewhat tediously drawn out to the requisite three-volume length?

GOSSE. The maniac sets fire to the house: she has to, for it is necessary to get rid of her, so that Rochester may marry Jane. At the same time it behoves the novelist to show a noble soul in her hero, and the best plot that Charlotte can devise is that in trying to save his wife's life Rochester is blinded by a falling beam. Even so, Charlotte's difficulties are not cleared up, for it would be a cheerless sort of story if Rochester did not recover his sight, and, as soon as he has been blind a couple of years, he says to Jane: Jane, something seems to glitter on your dress. It is the chain you gave me. Your sight is coming back—or words to that effect. Sensation!

MOORE. It is strange that our fathers and mothers were not shocked by these evident absurdities.

GOSSE. *Jane Eyre* is the typical English story. The story that every generation rewrites, and that never fails at attract readers. New details are invented, each generation invents its own vocalisation, but the best seller is in essentials always *Jane Eyre.*

MOORE. We who have been about a good deal have no difficulty in imagining the number of literary pens that a story like *Jane Eyre* will set scratching, and the chatter it will set flowing at a dinner-table, as: it was, of course, wrong for Rochester to pass himself off as a bachelor. All the same his plight was a sad one, tied to a maniac wife whom he could not get rid of, and then the sudden switch off—the divorce laws ought to be amended. But do you not fear that if the marriage laws are loosened much further, they might as well be done away with? And are you quite sure that, if he had confided his secret to Jane in the first instance, she would have refused to live with him? If the speakers are acquainted with French poetry, one of them is sure to quote the lines:

> Gloire dans l'univers, dans les temps, à celui
> Qui s'immole à jamais pour le salut d'autrui!

And the inherent desire of martyrdom in the almost ugly, scrappy little woman, with burning grey eyes, will be described, and the tale told of her embarrassment when she stepped across the threshold of Smith, Elder's drawing-room, and found herself in the presence of six London celebrities, two of these standing on the hearth-rug, their coat tails lifted so that they might enjoy the blaze more thoroughly. The editor of *The Cornhill* was there. . . . At this moment an intrusive footman presses an entrée on the speakers; and, having helped themselves, the literary twain fall to thinking how the six portly gentlemen must have enjoyed putting questions to Charlotte, asking how she has gotten that sufficient knowledge of life which had enabled her to divine a man like Rochester.

GOSSE. Charlotte and her sister had been to school in Brussels, and they returned home together after a year's schooling, but Charlotte was drawn back to Brussels, in her own words, by an impulse that seemed to her irresistible.

MOORE. And it was this irresistible impulse that enlarged the Brontë silhouette almost indefinitely, and the discovery of letters continued the enlargement till it filled the entire literary horizon, and Monsieur Heger, the schoolmaster, came to supply needy bookmakers with a subject suited to popular taste. If I could only rid myself of my conscience, she said, on her way to Ste Gudule. Penitents were passing in and out of the confessional.

Charlotte was a Protestant, so it required an uncontrollable impulse to propel her into the confessional. At first the confessor would not hear her, she being a Protestant, but she would not take no for an answer—she confessed—what? If we only knew—if the reporters had been able to get hold of that confession there is reason to suppose that we should be discussing Charlotte's morals till we ascended to the judgment-seat. Even the present war was not sufficient to quench the desire to discuss whether Charlotte held the Professor's hand, or the Professor held hers. It broke out again in *The Times*, and not more than two years ago. You saw the correspondence, Gosse?

GOSSE. No, I didn't, but I like listening to you: go on.

MOORE. Some wandering gossip, or a newly discovered letter blew up the dying embers of this controversy; somebody died, somebody confessed, or new letters were discovered. I have forgotten, if I ever knew. I came upon a middle letter, and was struck by the almost passionate tenacity with which the writer clung to the belief that Charlotte's life had always been grey and dull, and that nothing had ever happened in it to redeem the monotony of ill-health and teaching. We know that we are not virtuous, we know that we cannot be virtuous, but we are anxious to believe that somebody else is virtuous. I suppose it cannot be otherwise, the doctrine of atonement having taken such a hold on us. But this explanation did not satisfy me altogether, and at odd times the thought returned that there must be more in it than the instinct of the individual, and, seeking for the instinct of the hive, I said to myself one day: of course, the whole national attitude regarding the Brontës would alter if it could be proved that she had held the schoolmaster's hand.

GOSSE. You're in excellent form to-day, and I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I too am being poked up by a contantly recurring thought. I think I remember your saying that I glided swiftly over *Wuthering Heights*, like one anxious not to commit himself to any definite opinion for or against the book, and I do not think I am going too far if I say that your suggestion was that my private judgment was held in check by the prevalent literary opinion of the time, headed by Swinburne, who——

MOORE. It seems to me quite reasonable to suppose that a man writing a history of English literature must refrain from challenging received opinions. I thought I had made that sufficiently clear. Moreover, the tendency of your mind, as I apprehend it, is to accept as true, what after all may be the truth, that the public is never wholly wrong but unable to express itself; you would like the public to come in, but in bibs and tuckers that you have provided and tied on.

GOSSE. Your view of my tendency seems to me of a remarkable clairvoyance. Just so does it appear to me that my intellectual and critical bias runs, though I never thought of it before. This is seeing oneself through the eyes of another, whereas your intellectual tendency, if I may venture to express it, is indifference; I might even go further and say you would like to keep the public outside. And now, having stood back to back and compared our heights, we shall do well to return to our yoe lamb—you see I preserve your pronunciation—the English novel. How does *Wuthering Heights* strike you as a masterpiece?

MOORE. Emily was born in 1818, and died in 1848, and presumably *Wuthering Heights* was written some years earlier, shall we say at six or seven and twenty? Well, masterpieces are not produced at that age, not even by Raphael, for the simple reason that nobody is a master of his craft, whatever it may be, till he has practised it for ten years, not even if it be the humble craft of prose narrative. And a casual glance into the book tells those who know how to read that it is just what a girl of genius, unpractised in her craft, and without experience of life, might write in a lonely parsonage, pitched high above a Yorkshire moor, wild and violent imaginings shot through with glimpses of real beauty. But a glimpse of beauty her vision of Heathcliff is surely, a man haunted by the memory of Catherine, his enemy's wife, who died many a year ago; more than twenty have passed over, but for Heathcliff there is nobody in the world but Catherine. She is never far away, often by his elbow; she has come to speak, but she utters no word, but signs to him, and he rises immediately from the meal, and follows her across the desolate heath. In vain, needless to say. The hallucination continues; he sees her in every face he looks upon, and we feel with him that only death can release him from the torture of the deception, for ever recurring in a hundred different aspects, and always failing him. Did Emily mean the wraith to stand for a symbol of life itself? She hardly knew. She wrote as we dream.

GOSSE. You think that Emily was the genius.

MOORE. The word is inapplicable to prose writers under forty, and more than a single work is necessary, and there is nothing in *Wuthering Heights* to show that Emily Brontë's talent would have developed.

The one that might have developed into a fine writer was Anne—she wrote a book called *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, a baby book, it is true, but the memory of it lingers in me to this day: a story of illegitimate love that came to naught, and for no valid reason that I could discover on my way to Castle Carra, whither I went a little scared lest perchance I had been born into a world in which nobody transgressed. It is with my boyish dread of a sinless world that she is associated, and with pity for her early death, coming before any taste of life. A virgin's death is the very saddest. Anne revealed her sadness to me, and I take this opportunity of paying my debt.

GOSSE. You have thrown every sort of stone against the

Brontës, and I can tell by your face that you think you brought down *Jane Eyre* with that last one—a eulogy of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall. Jane Eyre* is a silly story, no doubt, but many silly stories abound in beautiful pages, and *Jane Eyre* is not an exception. It is many years since I read it, but I am still haunted by a memory of the lovers in a dewy orchard or garden, and a dialogue that lasts all night: one that ends with the dawn, I think. You may have forgotten these pages, or only half remember them, as I do; if so, you will do well to read them again.

MOORE. Your memory is better than mine . . . in this instance, certainly. I have forgotten them.

GOSSE. Thank you for this tribute, which it is an honour to receive from one of prodigious memory, though of slight reading. And now there is a point of criticism which it seems to me you have overlooked. It is that, of all the novels written in mid-Victorian years, the Brontës' are the only ones that retain any faint vitality. *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* are read more easily than Lytton or Disraeli, more easily than the late Victorians; even more easily than Dickens, Thackeray and George Eliot. As a critic of English fiction it behoves you to consider how this has come to pass; and as you do not seem to be ready with an answer, perhaps you will allow me to tell you. Your charge against the English novel is that it has been, from the hour of its birth to the present year, concerned with the surface of life rather than with the depths. If this be true, need we look further for the reason why the novels we enjoyed in our boyhood are rejected by the younger generation? The great bulk of men and women know life only by the waves, and the popular novelist concerns himself with what attracts his public, the surface of life, all the little odds and oddments, the picturesque follies of the hour, the tricks of speech and manner, the ideas of the moment. And his audience is delighted, for he is presenting life as it appears to them.

But all these waves and wavelets sink into the deep, disappear, and when they have gone the books go with them.

MOORE. But the Brontës were popular during their lifetime.

GOSSE. To some extent, but it was not until the nineties that they met with any intelligent appreciation.

MOORE. I am beginning to understand—the Brontës wrote about life in its essentials, which, like the depths of the sea, do not change.

GOSSE. Mr. Arthur Mellows is never wholly wrong, but he cannot explain himself.

MOORE. Do you explain him?

GOSSE. That Parsonage and that heath which he photographed so often are not interesting in themselves, as he thought, but because they saved the Brontës from the English literary tradition, that in prose narrative only a thin upper crust of life is—shall I say—representable?

MOORE. The Brontës, knowing nothing of social life, were forced to look into the depths.

GOSSE. There may be less character in their books than there is in Lytton or Disraeli, but there's more humanity.

MOORE. I see; and that is why Swinburne wrote the monograph which he summoned you to hear, but he wearied in his reading and laid it aside so that he might read you his novel—a novel that he never wearied of, but which you and Mr Wise have decided shall never be published.

GOSSE. Outside his gift no man is very wise and, as I have mentioned in my biography of the great poet, whom I was fortunate enough to know intimately, Swinburne lost all receptive power at the age of forty. After forty his mind was closed to new ideas; it was less flexible, less elastic. I think that in my biography the word ossification almost occurs. I have no wish to withdraw it. In his later critical writings he never argued, explained, or analyzed. He merely hammered. The noise he made was sometimes ridiculous, as is shown in the sentence in which he called George Eliot an Amazon thrown sprawling over the crupper of her spavined and spur-galled Pegasus. And a hundred sentences as silly and as ugly could be culled from his prose writings. I quote this phrase, though it gives me pain to repeat it, for I believe that the origin of the monograph on Charlotte Brontë may be traced to his desire to write something that would distress George Eliot and her admirers, rather than to any genuine admiration of *Jane Eyre* or *Shirley*.

MOORE. Like everybody else in these islands, he looked upon prose narrative as an entertainment rather than as an art, an easy conclusion to arrive at after his many failures to write it.

GOSSE. In his secluded life fiction was his only entertainment. He read Dickens from end to end every three years, and three times he read Dickens aloud to Watts-Dunton.

MOORE. These two old men led an extraordinary life in the Putney villa reading to each other.

GOSSE. Once Watts-Dunton tried to escape from it; he married and brought his wife to live at The Pines. But she didn't stay long, she said she could not listen to two old men shouting at each other. A woman being read to death! But as she was a good wife, she took rooms over the way and came in occasionally to see that things were going on all right. We have no exact knowledge how Watts-Dunton bore the separation, apparently he did not allow it to disturb him in his life's work; but continued to look after Swinburne's literary interests, writing all the business letters, and keeping unwelcome and intrusive visitors from him with no thought of over the way. Life, in Watts-Dunton's administration of it, lay on the poet as light as a rose leaf. He read poetry and wrote poetry, went his walks to Wimbledon and back, and nothing happened till the day came when Swinburne had to make a will, for Watts-Dunton had no money, and the thought of his friend destitute in his old age was painful to Swinburne. But who was to make the will? Watts-Dunton, who began life as an attorney in the Midlands (he was, I believe, the last of the attorneys, that branch of the legal profession having been suppressed in or about the eighties) could not draw up a will in which he inherited all Swinburne's property, the law being that a man cannot be a beneficiary under a will that he himself has drawn up; and to introduce a solicitor into The Pines and let him into its secret, for it is to be known that Watts-Dunton was Swinburne's heir, would be publicity intolerable. The quandary was a difficult one and must have cost the old attorney many a sleepless night.

MOORE. Balzac!

GOSSE. But at last he determined to take the risk and make the will. Another reason for this step was that Watts-Dunton was not unmindful of his poor relations. A long string came from the Midlands, and each received a small sum, ten pounds apiece; a strange medley, relics of days gone by, eager, covetous, surreptitious as Nibelungs, and having gotten their money they disappeared quickly into the darkness they set out from.

MOORE. The will was not contested?

GOSSE. Watts-Dunton appears a better judge of human nature than one would have gathered from his novels, for, of course, the Swinburnes never thought of disputing the will. Why should they? It represented the intentions of their late relative, there could be no doubt of that, and that was sufficient for them. But Nature, always wonderful, exacts a little tribute even when she is most kind, and when Miss Isabel Swinburne came to the villa to see Watts-Dunton on business matters she could not refrain from dropping in the word heir—you see, Mr Watts-

Dunton, you who are the heir. The word was like an icicle in the old man's collar, freezing his very marrow and leaving him shivering after his visitor had left him, asking himself if after all she knew the will was not valid.

Moore. A delightful story, Gosse. Reading Dickens makes a marriage and almost unmakes it, the tribe of shuffling, snuffling relatives coming for their money, and then the great lady arriving in a brougham, blue paint and varnish, to play with the poor attorney with a velvet paw. You don't mind my changing the simile, I like the velvet paw better than the icicle. I hope Mrs Watts-Dunton didn't return to the villa after the poet's death. I like to think of him sitting under a lamp writing an ode to his dead friend. No, not an ode, but a dirge.

Begin, ye Wimbledon Muses, begin the dirge.

Gosse. Your imagination is lively, but you will not mind my saying that Nature is a better story-teller than you are. Watts-Dunton began neither ode nor dirge. At the time of Swinburne's death he was much more interested in his own memoirs. But he was an old man, and hardly able to undertake the task; an amanuensis, a secretary, suggested itself, and the choice fell upon a colonel, retired from the army, who arrived every morning to take down Watts-Dunton's memories at his dictation. But a little refreshment seemed necessary to both of them, and before noon Watts-Dunton's memories of Rossetti began to dim—you know he attended on Rossetti much as he attended on Swinburne—Rossetti was a chloral, Swinburne a whisky drinker, and I have often wondered if it were Swinburne's supreme lyrical gift that tempted Watts-Dunton away from the poet-painter, or the belief that the whisky habit could be more easily cured than the drug.

Moore. Nature is indeed a wonderful story-teller, and she has put into your hands, Gosse, a subject excellently suited to your humour. Take heed and be grateful for what the Gods have given you. The Putney Parnassus: there is your title. If you want a secondary title: the Poet and the Parasite. How I envy you, Gosse. You will write another masterpiece. You will, you will! But your face tells me that you're not well disposed towards the subject. Let us go over it again. It may be that you do not foresee the possibilities.

GOSSE. I'll hear you no longer. Algernon Charles Swinburne was my oldest friend, and I absolutely refuse to turn his home into a mockery.

MOORE. Into a mockery, Gosse! Will you let me tell you——

GOSSE. You may tell me no more, I won't listen, and under my own roof——

MOORE. I was going to speak to you about a poem by Swinburne, one that you never heard of.

GOSSE. A poem I never heard of!

MOORE. A story hangs by it, an article that was never written. It was proposed, whether by Frank Harris or another I am not quite sure, but during his editorship, that Swinburne should write an appreciation of Dickens for *The Fortnightly*. But the paper was never written, on account of the rejection of a poem, a ballad with: The wind wears o'er the heather, for refrain. Have you met the MS. of this poem in your researches?

GOSSE. I do not remember it, and Wise and I have gone through all the papers carefully. Are you sure that the poem was by Swinburne?

MOORE. I was told it was by Swinburne. It seemed to me rather casual, and if the appreciation had been written it would have been too much in the Pauline manner, asseveration upon asseveration. But let us not stray from the point of dutiful criticism, and, as I am a little weary of fault-finding, will you confide to me your best thoughts on Dickens? I thirst for some whole-hearted praise.

Gosse. I look upon Dickens as the first man of English genius who gave the whole of his genius to the novel-reader; he was able to do this, for he was without general culture; and, as Matthew Arnold pointed out, two things are necessary for the birth of art: the man and the moment. You have talked to me so much about English prose narrative that I find it a little difficult to disentangle my ideas from yours. But if you will have patience I think I shall be able to do so. It seems to me certain that in Dickens we got the man of genius, and it seems to me, if not as certain, at least arguable, that the moment of his coming was not propitious. By the moment we must understand not only the literary tradition that prevailed in his time, but the circumstances of his life. Dickens was a man of the people, and was without that school and university education which liberated Landor and Swinburne from the narrow sympathies and later prejudices of the Victorian age; added to which he had to get his living, and he could only do this by supplying the drawing-room with entertainment. You see, I accept your definition of the English novel; if he had not been a man of genius he would have continued the Lytton and Disraeli modes, and we should have had more historical flourishes, verbose politics, sentimental rodomontades, foppery, and high living. Instead of these we got the middle and lower classes, of these English literature was hardly aware before Dickens introduced them! You would prefer that he should have laid less stress on superficial markings—superficial is perhaps unnecessary—on markings, and you will tell me that, whereas Balzac stands a head and shoulders above Daumier, Gavarni and Monnier, such characters as Micawber, Stiggins, Dombey and Little Nell do not represent any deeper humanity than Cruikshank and Phiz. I answer you, and I think fairly, that though a great man is always greater than his environment, he is born of it and shares its qualities, good and evil. Balzac lived in a great moment of literary revival, one as favourable to French literature as the Elizabethan age was to English. But, in spite of these magnificent advantages, the great Tourainian was not, as yourself will admit, free from melodrama and sentimentality. Hand on your heart, is Vautrin better than Bill Sikes, and are the worse pages in *Little Dorrit* worse than certain pages in *La Femme de Trente Aus?*

MOORE. Which of Dickens' books do you like best?

GOSSE. On the whole, *Pickwick*, for we recognise the English middle classes in Mr Pickwick, and it is an achievement to discover their symbol. In the same book we have Sam Weller, and he stands for the mind of the lower classes, their humour and good-nature. A man that has set forth two figures as typical as these cannot be dismissed as unworthy of our literature merely because his *Travels in Italy* do not fulfil the aspirations of the young idea. For the sake of Mr Pickwick and his valet, Dickens is forgiven, at least by me, for the somewhat—shall I say?—lack-lustre buffoonery of the breach of promise case, Mrs Bardell, Serjeant Buzfuz, all and sundry. We forget these faults, puerilities, if you will. Remember that if France's portion is the incomparable novelist, England received the incomparable poet. Of what are you thinking?

MOORE. Do not be so prickly. Of what you are saying, what else? And that if our novelist had spent his evenings in the Nouvelle Athènes he would have written prose narratives worthy of our poetic literature, creating characters that in their seriousness would compare with Le Père Goriot and Philippe in *Un Ménage de Garçon.*

GOSSE. But if he had gone to France and spent his evenings as you suggest, we should not have had Dickens, but another man.

MOORE. His talent was more natural, more spontaneous, than any he would have met in France. He had more talent than Flaubert, Zola, Goncourt, Daudet; but he would have learnt from them the value of seriousness. A quick, receptive mind like his would have understood that a convict waiting in a march for a boy to bring him a file with which he may release himself from his irons is not a subject for humour. He need not have spent the whole of his youth on the Boulevard Extérieur. A few years would have been sufficient to dissipate the vile English tradition that humour is a literate quality. He would have learnt that it is more commercial than literary, and that, if it be introduced in large quantities, all life dies out of the narrative. A living and moving story related by a humorist very soon becomes a thing of jeers and laughter, signifying nothing. We must have humour, of course, but the use we must make of our sense of humour is to avoid introducing anything into the narrative that shall distract the reader from the beauty, the mystery, and the pathos of the life we live in this world. Whosoever keeps humour under lock and key is read in the next generation, if he writes well, for to write well without the help of humour is the supreme test. I should like to speak in my essay of the abuse of humour, but it would be difficult to make this abuse plain to a public so uneducated as ours, whose literary sensibilities are restricted to a belief that some jokes are better than others, but that any joke is better than no joke. I do not wish to libel the daily or weekly Press, but it would seem to me that we have not a critic among us who is prepared to say that humour is but a crutch by the aid of which almost any writer can totter a little way. I am afraid I am repeating myself, but the matter is of such literary importance that a repetition may be forgiven me. In the days of our youth, Gosse, *The Athenæum* was our first literary journal, and I do not think I exaggerate when I say that it must have published some hundreds of articles enforcing the doctrine that humour is a primary condition of prose narrative and, without it occurring to anybody, though all the best pens in London were writing for *The Athenæum* in the eighties, that Jean Jacques Rousseau attained a unique reality in literature by abstention from humour; I only remember one smile in his *Confessions*, and it does not outlast a sentence. It comes at the end of the journey that Jean Jacques undertakes for the benefit of his health, on his way back to Madame de Warens.

GOSSE. A book like the *Confessions* provokes different remembrances in all of us. But I agree with you that a very little humour would have turned a great and beautiful book into a vulgarity, and that only a very great writer would have abstained from humour. One shudders at the thought of what the scene in the garden would have become if Jean Jacques had not preserved his gravity. You remember it—Madame de Warens calling Jean Jacques into the bower to confide to him her project for his sexual education, and how sweetly she appreciates the boy's embarrassment, telling him that she will give him eight days to think the matter over? The character that emerges when she folds him in her arms is a new one in literature: the maternal mistress.

MOORE. I remember. One does not forget such writing as that. But how strange Jean Jacques's admirable lesson was never laid to heart in England.

GOSSE. I would make good some omissions.

MOORE. Pray make good my omissions.

GOSSE. I would point out that we look in vain for humour in the Greek and Latin poets; Aristophanes was an ironist rather than a humorist, and the same may be said of Shakespeare. The grave-diggers' scene in *Hamlet* was not written to set the audience giggling, any more than the scene between Cleopatra and the fruit-seller. These scenes and the patter of the porter in *Macbeth* were written to delay the action, so that the spectator might have time to meditate on the tragedies that were on their way to accomplishment. But the same cannot be said of the comic scenes relating to the building of the wall in the *Midsummer Night's Dream.* They may have been humorous originally, but I think it will be allowed that if the authority of Shakespeare were withdrawn from them, they would be resented, and rightly. But once more we are dropping into Shakespearean controversy. And to bring the conversation back, I will say we have strayed into Tom Tiddler's ground. No; you must not interrupt me. You asked me to make good your omissions. You have not said that the desire to giggle is looked upon as a rare quality, although everybody giggles, and on the smallest provocation, and that it is particularly obnoxious in the theatre, where it has almost made the acting of a tragedy an impossibility. A sense of humour well under restraint is a precious quality indeed, both in life and in literature: it saves us from urging our ideas upon our friends with undue insistence, and it is to the man of letters what the compass is to the mariner. I should like to continue a little further; but we have lighted our lanterns, and are searching for a man who has written prose narrative in English seriously.

MOORE. If Dickens had not come into our literature we should lose more than a certain number of books, something of ourselves, for Dickens has become part of our perceptions, and as the world exists in our perceptions he has enlarged the world for us. But can as much be said for Thackeray? If he had not come into our literature we should lose some books which I will allow to be admirable, so that hitches and hindrances in our conversation may be avoided. But I do not think that we should lose any more, for he seems to me implicit in the literature of the eighteenth century, in Fielding, to whom he has often been compared, and not without reason, for almost any reader acquainted with *Tom Jones* would feel that

Thackeray had modelled his style on Fielding's, adapting it to the temper of Victorian readers, robbing it of its gusto, and improving the spacing and ordination of the different parts. Both are equally interested in the surface of life, and both are equally unable or unwilling to look into the depths; one relates Squire Western's drunken bouts and his passion for hunting, and the other Pitt Crawley's habit of talking to Horrocks, the butler, during dinner. Thackeray's surfaces are often admirable, but that sense of the eternal which gives mystery and awe to a work of art was unknown to him, so it seems to me.

GOSSE. You said that *Tom Jones* was a book without seasons, without trees, without flowers, without a storm-cloud above the landscape, or a ray in it. Might not the same strictures be directed with equal force against *Vanity Fair?*

MOORE. Yes, indeed. Both books lack intimacy of thought and feeling. No one sits by the fire and thinks what his or her past has been and welcomes the approach of a familiar bird or animal. I do not remember any dog, cat or parrot in *Vanity Fair*, and I am almost sure that *Tom Jones* is without one. A caged blackbird or thrush is a painful sight, but the parrot has chosen domestication, like the cat and dog. Some of our home-birds love us, the jackdaw very often; the raven often prefers the warm out-house to the windy scarp. However this may be, he who loves animals and birds is more human than he who doesn't.

GOSSE. Grip loved Barnaby Rudge's shoulder, and was with him always in the Gordon riots and afterwards, I think, in prison. Can you remember what he said?

MOORE. Unfortunately, I cannot; it is a long while since I read Dickens, and I have forgotten the names of the animals and birds that figure in his pages.

GOSSE. There is Gyp in *David Copperfield*, who ekes out the character of Dora very happily; and we might think of many others.

MOORE. Dickens' description of Bill Sikes' dog shows that the writer had observed dogs and was in sympathy with their instincts. Altogether, Dickens' mind was richer, more abundant than Thackeray's; Thackeray's always seemed to me a meagre, sandy mind, an essentially ungenerous soil, that produced only starvelings.

GOSSE. But this description of Thackeray's mind is hardly in agreement with his characters—his characters only, the writing is often sloven.

MOORE. He was interested only in the drift and litter of social life, always pleased and proud to relate that a Major or a Colonel arrived at his club at a certain hour, and hardly less so to tell us how a lady of high degree is driven to satisfy her milliner and dressmaker by concluding a truce, paying something on account, the foe to wait for full settlement until the daughter's marriage is brought off. In *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes* a booby is presented deftly, but he is poorly conceived, the very booby of a commonplace mind, whereas boobies in Shakespeare, Balzac and Tourguéneff are men of genius as well as boobies.

GOSSE. Forgive me for interrupting you, but it may be well that I should remind you that the absence of interest in nature which you deplore in Thackeray is not shared by any first-rate writer in modern or antique times. It has become the fashion to say that we moderns discovered nature, but is this true? Virgil told the story of the fields as well as Wordsworth, and if the early Irish poets are remarkable for anything it is for their love of nature. The only great writer that I can call to mind who never mentioned a tree or flower, a field or hill, is François Villon.

MOORE. It is true that flowers and trees and familiar animals find perhaps as small a place in Villon's poems as in Thackeray's novels. But Villon was not lacking in human sympathies. Now, if I remember *The Newcomes* and *Pendennis* correctly, Thackeray's implicit approval of the attitude adopted by his good women towards Lady Clara Highgate and the porter's daughter whom they find nursing Pendennis shows that human beings were as remote from his sympathies as were the flowers and trees and fields. What he *did* understand, though, were prejudices and conventions, and that is why his novels seem old-fashioned to the younger generation.

GOSSE. But his characters represent something more than the conventions of his time. Becky Sharp represents an adventuress *prise sur le vif*.

MOORE. An adventuress according to the literary canons of the fifties—that is, an adventuress without a temperament, which is very much the same as a soldier without courage.

GOSSE. But I can imagine a man lacking in physical courage, yet a very good soldier.

MOORE. Through a moral courage that overcomes physical weakness. But it is not so easy to imagine an adventuress overcoming her distaste for love from a sense of duty.

GOSSE. Madame Récamier is reputed to have been a cold woman, yet she attracted men. A cold woman leading men on, making them miserable, and taking her pleasure in their misery is conceivable.

MOORE. Quite conceivable; but no such excellent and subtle conception of devilish malignity crossed Thackeray's mind; nor had he in mind the great adventuress, she whose weapon and defence is her sex. His mind did not move on grand, natural lines; he imagined a little intriguing, middle-class woman, determined to get on, and he was interested in her tricks: how she won over the women when they came into the drawing-room after dinner, how she bamboozled the younger Sir Pitt, etc.

So far he was in sympathy with his subject; but, as it appears to me, his interest in human nature did not compel him to ask himself any essential question about her. In writing once about a celebrated passage in St Paul I said: no man is known to us till he has revealed his sex to us; and with the alteration of one word the same phrase will serve me here. Thackeray, in writing of Becky Sharp, followed the English tradition. He observed, and abstained from meditation; he was satisfied with externals, and the human nature that belongs to all of us—our humanity—was unknown to him. It did not occur to him to humanise Becky Sharp by expatiating in her religious feelings, in her superstitions perhaps, because mankind is instinctively superstitious. He liked character better than humanity—a point of view that may be defended; but in omitting superstition from Becky Sharp's character he was sinning against the type; for no class or type is more likely to seek counsel in oracles, to believe in the line of luck than the adventurer and the adventuress; but Thackeray never sends Becky Sharp running to a Bond Street fortune-teller.

GOSSE. You have clung somewhat tediously to your idea that the English novelist never looks into the depths of life, and I have been waiting all the while for a quotation from Thackeray on this very question. He says somewhere, and in *Vanity Fair*—I will not answer for the exact words of the sentence, but he addresses the reader and points out to him that nothing appears above the waves, and that if he choose to look under them—well—he, Thackeray, is not responsible for what may be seen there.

MOORE. And what terrible thing was Thackeray hurling at? An adultery in Mayfair! I could relate a hundred, but without the magnificent Rawdon overthrowing the Marquis on the hearthrug, and flinging the jewels, the tokens of his wife's sin, in the nobleman's face.

GOSSE. A very theatrical scene, no doubt; altogether false, no doubt, but it is not easy to say what Rawdon should have done in the circumstances unless, indeed, he had adopted the grammatical pose related in the chronicles of French gallantries touching le Marquis de la Perdrigonde, who on returning home found his wife in the arms of a lover, an Englishman. I'm wrong, he was a German, and it was therefore quite natural that he should strike an attitude as soon as he was dressed and declare his intention to leave the room. Il fallait que je m'en aille, he said. Que je m'en allase, the Marquis de la Perdrigonde corrected. This grammatical unravelling of an awkward situation is not possible in English, owing to the leanness of our verbal system. But though our language is possessed of little grammar, the possibility of writing so as to defy criticism may be doubted. Landor took pleasure in reproving the ghost of Cicero for mistakes in Latin; in the person of Horne Tooke he reproved Dr Johnson, forcing him into an admission that he had constructed a sentence negligently; and it was only the other day that you came here with a bunch of mistakes gathered from Landor and Pater and myself; if I were to search your works I should not return with empty hands. But the mistakes of the illustrious ones, and perhaps my own obscure errors, are, if I may say so, different from the vulgarisms which are to be found in Thackeray, who, perhaps, is guilty of more than any writer of equal importance.

MOORE. But is he important?

GOSSE. I am afraid we shall have to leave the centuries to decide that point. Meanwhile, a word upon a personal matter, if it be not judged unseemly to interrupt a purely literary discussion for so slight a cause. You reproved me for my praise of *Jane Eyre*, saying that I yielded to popular clamour, but whatever truth there may be in this contention you will allow that my acceptance of Thackeray as a writer in keeping with the high tradition of our literature is faint-hearted.

Moore. Very.

Gosse. We can now pass from Thackeray to Trollope.

Moore. With whom I can shake hands more cordially than with Scott, for it was not he who turned literature into a trade; and, in view of your pronouncement that every man writes as well as he can, I will ask you if it would not be hard to discern a line more adapted to the abilities Trollope brought into the world than the line these same abilities discovered for themselves. He rose at six, and followed the road that leads to the Parsonage until it was time to go to the Post Office. The Bishop, the Parson, and the Squire appear in suitable parts, the young girl and the lover are supplied with admirable consciences and chaperons, and between-whiles there are pages, sometimes chapters, devoted to the subjects most likely to interest his readers: sport, farming, the housing of the poor and the condition of the junior clergy are written about in a way that all may read without any disturbance of their preconceived opinions. In *Barchester Towers* his admiration for nice conduct exceeds Thackeray's, whose style he is supposed to have continued. The Widow Bold is perchance kissed at a party by a man she dislikes, an unfortunate accident, no doubt, but one that hardly warrants the sobs and tears which he deems it necessary to measure out to her, and the soul searchings that racked her: did I by look or word encourage the horrid creature to suspect that I cared for him? No, I certainly did not. In the fifties tears were more common than they are to-day. But it may be doubted whether, even in the fifties, young ladies looked upon parties in which kisses were never exchanged as altogether successful. Tears are sometimes in fashion and sometimes out of fashion, but kisses, so the proverb tells us, are always in fashion, like the gorse flower.

Gosse. He drones like an old lady to her niece after tea.

Moore. It is not difficult, it is impossible to write for the parsonage in good prose. A good writer adventures himself into windy Pontic seas, and the dangerous straits of Abydos, where the oyster is reared.

Gosse. I do not know you as a Virgilian.

Moore. Héloise led me to Virgil. I am writing *Héloïse and Abélard*; but we must abide with Trollope for the present. Out of date, *suranné*. . . . The wake of the vessel has not yet disappeared into the grey expanse of water, and we catch still sight of those coasts whence we have come, crinolines, azure chamber ware, pink decanters, rep curtains, blue finger-bowls. These things Trollope represents, and is endeared to us thereby.

Gosse. If his fame rests only upon these things——

Moore. His fame rests on a much more solid foundation. Trollope, in spite of his name, and his temperament, which was in strict accordance with his name, was a great revolutionary.

Gosse. Your paradox puts me in mind of a line of Hugo's:

> Des révolutions dans des écailles d'huîtres.

Moore. I would not have you speak disrespectfully of Trollope, who carried commonplace further than anyone dreamed it could be carried, and brought about the reaction. When nature seems to have been expelled definitely from art nature begins to return to art. You, Gosse, have wandered over many seashores with your father, the naturalist, and remember the drift and litter of seaweed with here and there a dying starfish and many other derelicts of the sea; you could enumerate them better than I should, and you can therefore appreciate the comparison. Only the faintest line remained on the horizon—I think the year was '48. In that year three men met one night in a studio in a street off Oxford Street, Berners Street or Newman Street—John Everett Millais, Holman Hunt and Rossetti—to preach and to instigate the necessity of a return to nature, and the following year the tide was breaking over the evil-smelling pools. We owe the Pre-Raphaelite movement to Trollope.

GOSSE. There's generally something in what you say, and it may well be that the return to nature which began in '48 was brought about by the stifling atmosphere of Victorian conventions. But Millais illustrated some of Trollope's books.

MOORE. The drawings he contributed to *Orley Farm* are in his best Pre-Raphaelite manner, and almost persuade us that we have read the book.

GOSSE. You over-estimate their power. They cannot persuade me to bear with the listless amble of Trollope. prose.

MOORE. An amble listless as Modestine's, that no sapling cut from the hedge could urge her out of, an exasperating walk that tends to fall into a crawl, and that you fear will end in a nap by the roadside.

GOSSE. It would be interesting to know if the book *Orley Farm* dropped on Millais' knees, and if, looking through the studio, he said to himself: my drawings are the condemnation of the text.

MOORE. He was too eagerly concerned with his own work to give a thought to the merits or demerits of *Orley Farm*, and acquiesced in the belief that novels were like that, and probably regretted that he could not illustrate without reading. Painters are excellent judges of literature.

GOSSE. He must have thought it strange that——

MOORE. Thought what strange? Continue to put questions to me, for every one helps to clear my mind.

GOSSE. But Wordsworth broke the conventions before the painters did.

MOORE. It was the turn of the painters to do something for Art, and, by Jove, they did it. The naked woman banished from the one art was welcome in the other, and you must not forget that the novelist in the fifties wrote almost at the dictation of the circulating library. His works were published at thirty-one-and-sixpence, and distributed and collected by a service of carts. If the librarian did not think that his book made agreeable drawing-room entertainment it was not heard of again. The librarian was an autocrat, and no one dared to be original, even if he could.

GOSSE. Do you think that this censorship has prevented the addition of a prose epic to our literature?

MOORE. A prose epic implies the existence of a man of genius, and genius, I suppose, cannot be censored. It will find a way out, so it is said, though all the doors and windows are barred—up the chimney, through the keyhole. And if that be true a first-rate genius did not exist in the fifties.

GOSSE. You will perhaps agree with me that the Russians have, on the whole, produced the best story-tellers. Tourguéneff, Tolstoy, Dostoieffsky, Görki are all story-tellers; Tchekoff too.

MOORE. Yes, indeed. There can be little doubt that the instinct of story-telling is in the Russians more than in any other race—more than in the French, who have only had Balzac on the big canvas, and Maupassant on the ivory tablet. We perceive it in every Russian that has come over here, and miss it in every Englishman. And now, thank you once more for having allowed me to come to talk to you about a matter which I dare to think is of more than casual interest. I shall try to assimilate and compose our conversations into the form of an essay, stopping at Trollope, for it would be useless and perhaps unkind of me to continue my search for a story-teller among my contemporaries, but of the dead we may speak as plainly as we please. You have no idea how you have helped me, Gosse. You have done me a service that I shall always remember.

GOSSE. One moment. You have forgotten Pater.

MOORE. Whose *Marius the Epicurean* is the only English narrative that men of letters will turn to in the years that lie ahead of us.

GOSSE. He applied himself to the art of writing.

MOORE. He wrote the only prose that I never weary of; but it was not of the beauty of his prose that I was about to speak, but of something which is perhaps as important. He wrote more about humanity than character. You remember the chapter entitled White Nights. In it he allows Marius to pass before us almost without distinguishing trait as a typical young man of all time; and as a foil to the almost abstract Marius he sets Flavius, whom the casual reader prefers, for character rather than humanity was Pater's intention in his portrait of Marius' friend. You have set me thinking again, Gosse. English literature is not without a story-teller, for if we look across the Atlantic we find one, and a marvellous one—Poe.

GOSSE. It is indeed a surprise to me to hear that you admire a writer so essentially unhealthy as Poe, one so concerned with the very hypertrophy of emotion. The very name of his characters seems to lead one out of the world of humanity into a region of ghosts: Ligeria, Morella, Berenice, Eleonore. Antiquity was not enamoured of death.

MOORE. Not enamoured, but antiquity knew the poetry of life to be in our consciousness that it is passing from us always. I will go further and ask you if it is possible for even a peasant to love a woman in life's daily usage as he does in remembrance, and if this be so why should Poe be blamed for setting forth as representative of human life many beautiful symbols bearing women's names? Not content with the surface of life, like Trollope, Poe sought a finer distillation.

GOSSE. Do you not think we should be drawn to art to praise life?

MOORE. The mere reversal of the theologian's formula seems too simple an expedient.

GOSSE. What would you put in place of it?

MOORE. The artist is without dogma, or, if you like to put it differently, he is his own dogma; and to tell the story that life brought to him——

GOSSE. Leaving out all philosophy?

MOORE. A philosophy is implicit in every well-told story.

GOSSE. What philosophy would you extract from the Iliad.

MOORE. That beauty is worth our pursuit.

GOSSE. In Stevenson?

MOORE. Stevenson is a butterfly content to enjoy the warmth of the sun and follow the scent of the flowers, and his enjoyment in these is so delightful that we join in the chase, children once again, led by a child; and after a long day in the open air we return to re-live our adventures in drowsy dreams; but when he met some Protestants in the Cevennes who reminded him of his own Scotch Protestants, he was moved to drop into philosophy, saying, and I think very superficially, that Catholics remained always Catholics, and Protestants always Protestants.

GOSSE. Are you sure that that is the case?

MOORE. Quite sure, else we should not have had the Reformation. Protestants and Catholics are not different sects, but two eternal attitudes of the human mind.

GOSSE. In the pages that do not meet with your approval——

MOORE. In the pages that I venture to consider, to measure and to weigh——

GOSSE. There is a good deal that you must have recognised as true in Stevenson: the pleasure, for instance, that he felt on finding himself once again in a Protestant atmosphere could not have been told at all by Poe, who was not so great a master of words as Stevenson.

Moore. A very inadmissible statement, Gosse, for how else but by the beauty of the words can you explain Poe's poetry, and that he wrote better poetry than Stevenson will be conceded by all men of letters, and if you fail to nod your head approvingly I'll write to Sir Sidney Colvin, who, though bewitched by his edition of Stevenson's correspondence, will not deny——

Gosse. So you look upon Poe as a master of words, and his English as equal to Baudelaire's French.

Moore. You must have forgotten the beautiful opening of Baudelaire's introduction; let me recall it to your memory: Is there a devil Providence that bends over the cradles to choose its victims, and with malice prepense throws the purest spirits into hostile regions like martyrs into the arenas—are there then souls dedicated to the altar who walk to death and glory through their ruined lives? Baudelaire asks this question, for in view of Poe's life and his own he is minded to believe in this devil Providence. And to know the lives of these two men is to share their mutual conviction that they were victims of such a Providence—Poe even more than Baudelaire, for to this very day the ill-luck that presided at his birth has not ceased, it is implicit in your question: Is Poe's English equal to Baudelaire's French? The most beautiful translation, the good fairy said, as she descended her cloud staircase, that a man ever had shall be thine; but she was overheard by the bad fairy, who returned down the chimney saying: I cannot take away the gift that the good fairy has given thee, but it shall be said commonly that thou canst only be read in translation. Ma fiancée et ma compagne d'étude et enfin l'épouse de mon cœur seems commonplace and trite when compared with: My friend and my betrothed, who became the partner of my studies and finally the wife of my bosom, and we are conscious of a drop when we read: Si jamais la pâle Ashtophet de l'idolâtre Egypte aux ailes ténébreuses, and remember the beautiful English: The wan and misty-winged Ashtophet of idolatrous Egypt, and so on through the beautiful pages of *Ligeria* we can detect a delicate rise and fall, the original and the translation having the upper hand in turns.

GOSSE. As usual, a good deal of what you say is true, and I am with you so far that it cannot be seriously maintained that a translation that follows the original, comma by comma, full stop by full stop, can be said to possess great beauties of style that are not discoverable in the original. All the same, I think something happened in the translation, but you will allow that a less favourable example of Poe's style might have been selected. In the story of William Wilson, Poe tells how the struggle between good and evil continues in the same individual till the evil overpowers the good.

MOORE. And he tells his story without the help of magic potions.

GOSSE. You have *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in your mind.

MOORE. Stevenson's story is no more than a popular version of Poe's. I have always looked on this story as elusively autobiographical, for Poe was a poet, and a man of science, and although the poet was the stronger of the two, the man of science makes himself felt sometimes in the prose.

GOSSE. And Baudelaire's service was to attenuate the diagrams.

MOORE. If there are diagrams in Poe's prose sometimes, there are festoons and astragals in Stevenson's always.

GOSSE. As a writer, you place Hawthorne higher than Poe.

MOORE. A young man cannot overlook Poe, but he can Hawthorne, Hawthorne's genius not being so evident as Poe's; but if our young man be worthy of our consideration, he will return to Hawthorne in later life and without losing any of his admiration for Poe. One does not exclude the others; our æstheticism should be wide enough to include Michelangelo and Phidias; and when I enter *The House of the Seven Gables* I walk about admiring the almost Greek absence of accent.

GOSSE. Is it not one of your little perversities to consider Hepzibah Pyncheon as Greek?

MOORE. A truce to the discussion regarding their characteristics, for have I not seen little mediæval virgins from Rhenish towns as gainly as Greeks maidens, and though there be nothing in Greek art as ungainly as Hepzibah, there is nothing that I can remember at this moment as modest in Gothic. But it matters nothing to me whether you call her Greek or Gothic if you admire her; and as the two styles mingle in her, I would that our twain admiration of her should turn to one this summer afternoon.

GOSSE. Your talk of her the last time you were here caused Sylvia to take the book from the shelves. It is on the table by you.

MOORE. I should like to read to you the description of the old maid and her agony of mind——

GOSSE. The morning that she descends the old timbered stairs to open the shop for the first time. It is many years since I read it, and it will come upon me quite fresh.

The old maid was alone in the old house. Alone, except for a certain respectable and orderly young man, an artist in the daguerreotype line, who, for about three months back, had been a lodger in a remote gable—quite a house by itself, indeed—with locks, bolts, and oaken bars on all the intervening doors. Inaudible, consequently, were poor Miss Hepzibah's gusty sighs. Inaudible, the creaking joints of her stiffened knees, as she knelt down by the bedside. And inaudible, too, by mortal ears, but heard with all-comprehending love and pity in the farthest Heaven, that almost agony of prayer—now whispered, now a groan, now a struggling silence—wherewith she besought the Divine assistance through the day! Evidently this is to be a day of more than ordinary trial to Miss Hepzibah, who for above a quarter of a century gone by has dwelt in strict seclusion, taking no part in the business of life, and just as little in its intercourse and pleasures. Not with such fervour prays the torpid recluse, looking forward to the cold, sunless, stagnant calm of a day that is to be like innumerable yesterdays!

The maiden lady's devotions are concluded. Will she now issue forth over the threshold of our story? Not yet, by many moments. First every drawer in the tall, old-fashioned bureau is to be opened, with difficulty and with a succession of spasmodic jerks; then, all must close again, with the same fidgety reluctance. There is a rustling of stiff silks; a tread of backward and forward footsteps, to and fro across the chamber. We suspect Miss Hepzibah, moreover, of taking a step upward into a chair, in order to give heedful regard to her appearance on all sides, and at full length, in the oval, dingy-framed toilet-glass that hangs above her table. Truly! well, indeed! who would have thought it! Is all this precious time to be lavished on the matutinal repair and beautifying of an elderly person who never goes abroad, whom nobody ever visits, and from whom, when she shall have done her utmost, it were the best charity to turn one's eyes another way?

Now she is almost ready. Let us pardon her one other pause; for it is given to the sole sentiment, or, we might better say—heightened and rendered intense, as it has been, by sorrow and seclusion—to the strong passion of her life. We heard the turning of a key in a small lock; she has opened a secret drawer of an escritoire, and is probably looking at a certain miniature, done in Malbone's most perfect style, and representing a face worthy of no less delicate a pencil. It was once our good fortune to see this picture. It is a likeness of a young man, in a silken dressing-gown of an old fashion, the soft richness of which is well adapted to the countenance of reverie, with its full, tender lips, and beautiful eyes, that seem to indicate not so much capacity of thought, as gentle and voluptuous emotion. Of the possessor of such features we shall have a right to ask nothing, except that he would take the rude world easily, and make himself happy in it. Can it have been an early lover of Miss Hepzibah? No; she never had a lover—poor thing, how could she?—nor ever knew, by her own experience, what love technically means. And yet, her undying faith and trust, her fresh remembrance and continual devotedness towards the original of that miniature, have been the only substance for her heart to feed upon.

She seems to have put aside the miniature, and is standing again before the toilet-glass. There are tears to be wiped off. A few more footsteps to and fro; and here, at last—with another pitiful sigh, like a gust of chill, damp wind out of a long-closed vault, the door of which has been accidentally set ajar—dusky, time-darkened passage; a tall figure, clad in black silk, with a long and shrunken waist, feeling her way towards the stairs like a near-sighted person, as in truth she is.

Moore. How restrained and how full of seriousness and dignity, a portrait that Balzac would read twice over, recognising in it a vision as intense as his own and better balanced, and Tourguéneff would have recognised in Hawthorne's portrait genius akin to his own.

Gosse. It is a pleasure to listen to prose like that.

MOORE. And it is a pleasure to me to hear you express approval as I read to you on a balcony on a summer afternoon. Say again that you do think with me that no writer of English prose narrative has written as beautifully.

GOSSE. I would agree with you with more alacrity if I were sure that my acquiescence would not provoke you to some unpleasant gibes. There is still George Eliot to be considered; and I would willingly dispute the truth of some of the evil things that have been said about her if I were not altogether and utterly overcome by the graceful proportions and the temperate dignity of Hawthorne's portraiture. In the pages you have read we are conscious of his beautiful, calm mind as we are of the sun behind yon cloud, illuminating it, filling it with the poetry of a beautiful summer afternoon.

MOORE. He wrote out of a well-cultivated intelligence, and recalling Pater inasmuch that his desire, like Pater's, was to make each separate sentence a work of art in itself. Nor are his gifts of vision and comprehension of human life exhausted in his portrait of Hepzibah; it breaks my heart that I cannot read the whole chapter. It is too long; but do you read Clifford's portrait when I am gone, for, as it seems to me, it stands on as high a level, in some ways on a higher level, than anything accomplished by Balzac or Tourguéneff, and to compare it with the work of any English novelist would be as absurd as to draw a comparison between Rembrandt and Frank Holl; but it would take half-an-hour to read it aloud, and I will accept your promise that you read these pages when I leave you in lieu of your attention. I turn down the leaf at the place. And I must exact a promise from you that you read *Phœbe* too. A portrait of a young girl in her teens can never be carried further than a sketch, she being herself no more than a sketch. But was there ever a more beautiful sketch, one more instinct with awakening life? The book drops on our knees, and we ask ourselves what her womanhood will bring forth in fateful happiness or blunder. It seems to have been part of Hawthorne's problem to stir the reader to musings of this sort, and very admirably he does, with Phœbe's voice rising and falling to the pathetic tinkle of a harpsichord, pathetic always to our ears from its very inadequacy of sound, and doubly pathetic are the tones of Hepzibah's harpsichord, in this old, timbered house.

He, Clifford, would sit quietly, with a gentle pleasure gleaming over his face, brighter now, and now a little dimmer, as the song happened to float near him, or was more remotely heard. It pleased him best, however, when she sat on a low footstool at his knee.

Gosse. Then we have come upon the narrative we are in search of.

Moore. The harmony is not less expressive than the souls that fulfil it, and not less when we meet them in the torn, uncouth garden, encroached upon by the back yards of some near streets, and the speckled fowls, and the patriarchal cock that scuttles away from approaching footsteps, creeping through broken box hedges, than they were in the falling house; and in keeping, too, are the words that Phœbe speaks to the daguerreotypist in the garden revealing her pretty soul and to its very depths. The daguerreotypist, Holgrave, is the lodger; he was there from the beginning before the arrival of Phœbe and Clifford, and he, too, might have been.

Gosse. So we have come to the might have beens.

Moore. You seem relieved by the prospect that our search may end in failure, thinking, perhaps, that it would not be in keeping to come upon perfect art in a world that has outlived beauty. Holgrave is of the unfortunate class in story books—the class that the author cannot keep himself from intellectualising; Holgrave has been heavily intellectualised, and when he has finished his disputations with Phœbe the reader is informed that he had visited Europe and found means before his return to visit Italy and part of France and Germany too. At a later period he had even spent some months in a community of Fourierists, and still more recently he had been a public lecturer or mesmerist, for which science he had very remarkable endowments, and a few pages later we learn, this time without surprise, that he is a frequent contributor to the magazines, and that he has an article in his pocket into which he has put an incident of the Pyncheon family. He would like to read it to her, and henceforth the truth, if it must be spoken, is that the story evaporates in the literary prejudices and conventions for which Scott and his ilk are responsible.

It is all very sad, and how it came about I am afraid will never be thoroughly explained. To whom are we to assign Judge Pyncheon, who is stricken suddenly in death while sitting in an arm-chair facing the portrait of the original Pyncheon, the witch-burner? Nor is this all; behind the portrait is the document he has long been in search of, for the discovery of it would put him into possession of the larger part of the State of Ohio. To whom are we to assign this plot? The claimants are so numerous that I think we had better assign it to the English literary tradition of what a novel should be, and we should rather wonder that Hawthorne succeeded in writing beautiful openings than that he failed to write perfect works.

GOSSE. I am glad that you think that the age a man lives in influences his art as much as his individual talent.

MOORE. I remember that you say somewhere that, had Tennyson been born in 1550, he would have possessed the same personality; but his poetry, had he written verse, would have had scarcely a remote resemblance to what we have now received from his hand, and you go on to say that we are in the habit of describing a man's originality as merely an aggregation of elements which he has received by inheritance. If this be so, it follows that the congenital commonplace of the English novelist is also an aggregation of elements that he receives by inheritance. We need not seek further for the extraordinary lack of art in English prose narrative.

Gosse. There is no escape from your conclusion, unless we accept the alternative that the perfect moulding of a story is alien to the genius of the race.

Moore. A somewhat crude conclusion, one that I shrink from accepting, but it would be vain to pretend that it is not supported by facts, and one of the most significant is Hawthorne, who failed to carry a story through. *The Blithedale Romance* opens on a prospect of story that I read tremulous with fear lest Hawthorne's strength should fail him as it had done in the conclusion of his *House of the Seven Gables.* The story rose higher, beautiful it seemed to me as a bird on wing; and I said, on the two hundredth page: we are in Eldorado safe, for he will not commit so patent a mistake as to allow him who joins the community to return to New York or Boston till the end of the story. And asking myself if his art were sufficient to continue the story in the community I looked to see how many more pages there were to read. About two hundred, I said. It was in the middle of *The House of the Seven Gables* that he broke down. The strain became greater at every page, and after the splendid scene between the two men, he could not do else but leave—there was no other issue. But so great is an artist's desire of the masterpiece that I continued to hope the impossible might happen; by some miracle of genius, I said, he may be served, and so vivid is his telling of the disquiet and sense of spiritual loneliness that comes over us on our return to the multitudes that it began to seem as if he had hit upon a way out of the difficulty. My hopes were at pitch, and I waited almost breathless for the loosening of the clutch. Alas! he walked to the window, and on looking across a courtyard saw against the lighted panes forms that he could not doubt were Zenobia's—I have forgotten the other woman's name. They, too, had come up to town. After that the book drifted out somehow as inconsequently as *The House of the Seven Gables.*

GOSSE. Have you read *The Scarlet Letter?*

MOORE. No; and I never shall. The subject is too painful.

CHAPTER 3.

MOORE. On an autumn evening by the fire, thinking is pleasanter, more soothing than writing; but talking, æstheticising, with one's feet to the blaze, is delightful, and of all, after a long day's work, when the brain is a little weary. And to this pleasure I can look forward, for at five o'clock Balderston, a young American, whom I met some months ago in a house in the King's Road, among some American Quakers, is coming to see me, and that will be pleasant. It would be pleasanter still if he were a painter instead of a writer; for any young American between the ages of twenty and thirty carries my thought back to the years long ago in Julian's studio in the Pasage des Panoramas, Galerie Montmartre, I think, for the first gallery on the left-hand side is Galerie des Variétés. With what strange vividness we remember the places we frequented in our youth! I remember the shops all the way down to the studio, and the studio itself in its every detail—the staircase leading to it, with Julian's kitchen on the first landing, and the old woman popping in and out, she who used to turn on Julian fiercely if he looked to see whether his coat had been brushed. Monsieur, je vous ai dit que j'ai brossé votre jaquette. Vous ne me croyez donc pas? Years have gone by but the things thereof are not dead; the smell of that staircase is in my memory, and the images of many Frenchmen: Boutet de Monvel, and the fellow with the red beard, Renouf was his name; he used to get his flesh tints too red, Monvel was prone to violet; Lefebvre's great pupil, Ducet, came to little despite his efforts to escape from what he had been taught. Lizzie Gardiner, she who married Bouguereau, must be an old woman if she is alive. Yet I loved her. What has become of the fair-haired girl who married the old naval officer? And her friend, the Creole, who spoke classical French and married Ducet? Ou sont ils Vierge souveraine? Their faces look at me through the crowd, and go again, but I can see Chadwick more distinctly than ever, tall and elegant, a finely cut profile, a pale perplexed eye, not eyes, for I see him in profile, which is not strange, so clear-cut and distinguished is the profile; and so possessed was he of distinguished and refined manners that he drove out my preconceived notions of Americans, derived from Dickens—from the types described by the Britisher when he walked down the gangway on the other side. It is a weakness of youth to believe travellers' tales, and the remembrance of my surprise at finding some Americans to be gentlemen and ladies amuses me still, though forty years have passed over. Mais où sont ils? Gone to dust and ashes, no doubt: a camp that has passed away, passed out of my life, not one of its folk returning into my life, but Chadwick, and he only for a few hours. He took a chair opposite me some five or six years ago in a Bouillon Duval. We looked at each other. I said: Chadwick; he said: Moore; and after breakfast we walked down the quays, for I would not part with my old friend till I had seen his pictures. He protested, saying his studio was on the fifth floor, but he led me thither, for I insisted, and we had not been looking at the canvases turned against the wall for long, when his wife came in, a Swede, a painter, bringing her daughter with her; Chadwick's daughter more than hers. The same thin, medallion-like profile, the same red hair, an echo of my old friend, I said; and my thoughts transferred to Mrs Chadwick put these words into her mouth: Elle est bien sa fille——

MAID. Mr Balderston, sir.

BALDERSTON. I've not awakened you from a doze, I hope.

MOORE. No, I was not dozing, only thinking that I was fated to have American friends; and what is stranger still, to have kept them all. I've had many quarrels with my English, Irish and French friends, but never with an American, not even with an American publisher, unless, indeed——

BALDERSTON. Don't try to remember a half-forgotten misunderstanding, for I judge from your manner that it is no more. Let it be as you say, you have never quarrelled with an American friend, and I hope I shall not be the first. You have many good friends in America.

MOORE. I know it.

BALDERSTON. And if I'm not mistaken the *Fortnightly* conversations with Mr Edmund Gosse will be appreciated in America. But do you not think that you were unjust when you said that prose narrative was not within the reach of the Anglo-Saxon genius?

MOORE. I'm afraid that I barely apprehend the word unjust in this connection: Unjust! Will you mention a reasonable narrative, a serious prose narrative.

BALDERSTON. If we except the Iliad and Odyssey we shall seek the world over for a human narrative in verse.

MOORE. I had not thought of that, but I suppose you're right. *The Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost* are versified mythologies. Be this as it may, there is very little good narrative in the world.

Balderston. No race has produced so much bad narrative as the Anglo-Saxon.

Moore. I thought I had at least made that point clear in my conversations with Mr Gosse.

Balderston. You did indeed, but the reason you gave was that the English novelist's first thought was how he could make most money. But all Englishmen cannot be mercenary. We know that in the art of painting they are not.

Moore. Pray let me have the benefit of your thoughts.

Balderston. We know that young men think a good deal about sex. I do not say they should not, and I do not say they should. I hold no brief for either side. I am merely stating a fact. We know that in life they do think a good deal about sex. But in the English novel, a young man never attempts more than a kiss, and repents profusely. We know too that in life he does not repent, and goes unpunished very often, but the law over the novel is that he must repent, and be punished. You will see my point in a moment, which is not that a measure of sordid intrigue is essential in a novel, but that an obligation to falsify in one direction brings in its train other falsifications. In your conversation with Mr Edmund Gosse you did not mention the pressure that the libraries put upon authors, and it is the censorship that libraries exercise that——

Moore. Accounts for a singular lack of masterpieces. No, I'm not sneering. Fiction was issued in the eighties only in the three-volume form, which allowed the libraries to dictate what might and might not be written. And the strangest part of my story is, that the libraries were not to be moved out of the opinion they had formed by the Press, though *The Spectator*, then edited by Hutton, one of the great Victorian editors, and one of the great moralists, reviewed *A Modern Lover*, my first book, in two columns of praise, and the *Fortnightly* singled it out for review, a rare piece of good fortune to happen to an author's first book. The *Fortnightly* was then edited by John Morley, now Lord Morley; it will hardly be contended that he was given to reviewing pornographic literature; the writer of the article was Sir Henry Norman, who also bears a record as spotless as his editor in the eighties. But the libraries did not like to admit they had made a mistake, and mine would have been a Dreyfus case if circumstances had not permitted me to issue *A Mummer's Wife* to the public at a popular price. At six shillings it reached the public, helped by an enthusiastic Press, which, however, did not succeed in convincing the libraries that their views regarding literary morality were exceptional, for it is not reason but prejudice that rules the world; and ten years later *Esther Waters* failed, as *A Mummer's Wife* failed, to move Smith out of the absurd position his librarians had placed him in. It is worth while to record the librarian's name, Mr Faux, for while telling authors that he could not circulate their books, he entertained them with the coarsest stories I've ever heard: a common man, no doubt, who distinguished between the spoken and the written word, and deemed himself virtuous when he told the reporter that because of certain Pre-Raphaelite nastiness in the narrative he could not circulate a book which, I would have you remember, has done more to awaken Christian virtue in the heart than any other book; which, incidentally, of course, has been of much practical utility; for there is an Esther Waters Home for Girl Mothers. The very name has become so synonymous with goodness that it cannot be pronounced without causing an uplifting of the spirit. You think that I cannot advance proof. Listen to this; a friend sent it to me not many days ago; a page torn from *The Shaftesbury Magazine*, containing an article by Miss Kingsford about The Fallow Corner Home for Homeless Children. She begins the articles with this sentence: In 1898, a hospital nurse who dearly loved children read *Esther Waters*, by George Moore, and thereupon determined to forego the dream of her life—a convalescent home of her own for little children—and made up her mind instead to start a home for the infants of unmarried working mothers, for whom practically no one seemed to care.

BALDERSTON. What do you think Mr Faux meant by Pre-Raphaelite nastiness?

MOORE. I don't suppose he attached any real meaning to the words, a ready-made phrase which came to his lips easily, whereby he might excuse himself for refusing to circulate an original book.

BALDERSTON. *Esther Waters* was your first popular success. But do you not think that if it had been preceded by other popular successes the libraries would have had to give way?

MOORE. It is probable that they would, but it is not likely that any writer whose aim is art will ever write many popular successes.

BALDERSTON. Pater regrets in the letter which you publish in your preface to Heinemann's edition of *The Confessions of a Young Man* that you cut yourself off from many readers by what I think he defines as your Aristophanic joy of life.

MOORE. Pater cut himself off from many readers by his unfailing sense of beauty; and I can imagine the embarrassment that would have been aroused in his face if I had warned him that he was cutting himself off from many readers by insisting on a certain unfailing sense of beauty, not readily apprehended by the casual reader.

BALDERSTON. You would have it that even Pater sometimes wrote sentences that he had not considered sufficiently.

MOORE. I believe that to be the case, but in the interest of the present conversation it would be well to attach ourselves closely to the folly of the Anglo-Saxon, that the moral conduct of his race is dependent on the last novel published. You know the story of the old woman who was afraid to relieve herself into the sea lest she might bring about an inundation: and on the subject of the moral influence of prose narrative the Anglo-Saxon race seems to be the counterpart of the old woman, for just as the old woman failed to understand the depth of the ocean tides, and that her little drop could not increase these, the Anglo-Saxon race cannot understand that man's sexual conduct has not varied during the centuries, and cannot vary. Yet on all other subjects Anglo-Saxon minds are reasonable enough.

BALDERSTON. Shakespeare and his contemporaries seem to have been pretty free from this belief, and it was Jeremy Collier who pointed out in the eighteenth century that shocking effects would follow if writers did not cease to produce comedies in which the husband was laughed at.

MOORE. I'd forgotten his name. Jeremy Collier! He attacked Congreve, who answered somewhat feebly that if vice was condoned during the course of the play virtue was always exalted in the concluding lines. Jeremy Collier's pamphlet was soon forgotten, and things went on very much as before, Sterne, Smollett and Byron writing as they pleased; Byron's *Don Juan*, it is true, provoked some protest from the editor of *My Grandmother's Review, the British*, for the disease was gathering strength, and in the nineteenth century Zola's novels were prosecuted under the Acts forbidding the sale of pornographic publications, and Henry Vizetelly, a man of letters, the author of several historical works, was put in prison. I have always looked upon Henry Vizetelly's death as a judicial murder. A false and hypocritical agitation that was, as you will see, when I tell you that Zola was received as a hero two years later in London, entertained by public bodies, and invited everywhere without the Vigilant

Society that has instigated the prosecution against Henry Vizetelly uttering a word of protest.

BALDERSTON. The welcome given to Zola practically admitted that an injustice had been done to Vizetelly.

MOORE. It did, indeed, and I've often wondered if the members of the Vigilant Society ever woke in their beds asking themselves if they were murderers. But while I'm telling you of the Vizetelly case you may be asking yourself: what significance can this prosecution of long ago have for me to-day? and I answer you that some things are for all time and never lose their significance, being part and parcel of humanity. I believe the Vizetelly case to be one of these, so packed is it with subterfuge, evasion, lies, hypocrisy, cunning, an ill-smelling midden, humanity at its very worst. It will surprise you to hear that this poor old gentleman, in the seventy-third year of his age, could not find a lawyer to defend him. If he had poisoned half-a-dozen nieces and nephews, brothers or sisters, he could have had the best advice the Bar could supply to prove him an innocent man, but because he published Zola's novels, he could find nobody. The Counsel he employed took the fees, but Counsel was a very pious man, who said that he could not go on with the case because, to do so, he would have to read the books. So he persuaded Mr Vizetelly to plead guilty; Mr Vizetelly removed the passages that were said to be objectionable, the books were published without them; new passages were, however, discovered; he was prosecuted again, and again he could find no Counsel to defend him, and again he was advised by those who took the fees to plead guilty; and the old man, at his wit's end, in the seventy-third year of his age, enfeebled by illness, consented, and was sent to prison. Poor old man! He said to me, in Holloway Gaol: there was a good jury, and I should have been acquitted if Counsel had gone on with the case, but he advised me to plead guilty, and I was in great bodily pain, and mental pain as well, and thought all the world was against me. Those were the words he spoke to me in Holloway Gaol; a few weeks after, he was dead.

BALDERSTON. Without doubt a painful story, and I can see it made a great impression on you.

MOORE. An ineffaceable impression.

BALDERSTON. In every court reformers who prosecute books present the same arguments, and they are familiar to everyone. Can you suggest how a book should be defended in order to show the jury the fallacy of the belief that morality depends upon literature, and at the same time expose the inconsistency of the crusaders in not attacking classics as well as new novels?

MOORE. I am not a lawyer, but I always had a taste for the Law, and were I not the only Irishman living or dead who cannot make a speech I should have had no difficulty in getting a verdict of acquittal from the jury:

GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY,

Certain passages have been read to you from a book which the Prosecution declares to be an immoral work, and if the charge can be established to your satisfaction the judge will be obliged to order the destruction of the book and to punish the publisher. The contention of the Prosecution is that man's moral nature and conduct are not only swayed but may be undone if certain societies do not keep strict watch over the latest publications, though it might seem more natural to believe that man's moral nature and conduct have come down to us generation after generation from the centuries unaffected by passing prejudices and conventions, as are the commotions in the air, the tides of the sea, and the seismic disturbances under the crust of the earth.

My first point is that the Acts under which this book is published were not intended by the author of the Acts to apply to literature but to pornographic publications that are quite distinct from literature. It is not true, as the Prosecution implied, that pornography and literature overlap, and that the frontiers are indistinct. On the contrary, the frontiers are extremely well defined, so much so that even if all literature was searched through and through it would be difficult to find a book that a man of letters could not instantly place in one category or in the other. The reason of this is that real literature is concerned with description of life and thoughts about life rather than with acts. The very opposite is true in the case of pornographic books. It is true, however, that in real literature a good deal of license is asked for by the author. He must write about the whole of life and not about part of life, and he must write truth and not lies. I think everybody will agree to concede this point to me, but with it goes the corollary that a book is not to be condemned because it contains a coarse passage. If this be denied all literature would have to be prosecuted. I also contend that a book cannot be judged by a carefully selected passage. It would be impossible to judge of the literary value of a book by a few passages; how then can you judge of the morality of the book by a few passages? I shall have to maintain, in the interests of the case I am defending, that a book cannot be judged by certain passages, and availing myself of the ruling of a great number of learned expositors, who have always held that if portions be read from a letter the opposing Counsel is entitled to have the whole letter read to the Court, I shall read you this book in its entirety, and afterwards I shall meet the charge that these isolated passages upon which this prosecution is based are unpermissibly broad by reading you extracts from books which are, by common consent, among the classics of our language.

I'm very sorry to be obliged to keep you from your homes while my assistants and myself read to you representative selections from all periods of English literature, but this case is of the utmost importance, of far more importance than any trial for murder, involving, as it does, the moral and intellectual vigour of our race. The case which you are asked to try has never been tried before. In the case of Vizetelly every effort was made on both occasions, and was made successfully, to induce him to plead guilty. He was told that the jury selected were small tradesmen who could not understand literary questions and would surely convict him. But I'm not of the opinion that small tradesmen cannot try a case of this kind, if one condition be complied with: that the case be laid before the jury in its entirety. We cannot get any kind of fair verdicts if shreds of cases are laid before juries, and that is what the Prosecution proposes to do—to judge the book by extracts. My intention is to get the whole of the case before the Court, and I can only do this by reading the book to you from cover to cover, and reading to you passages from authors of established reputations, authors with whom everybody is supposed to be acquainted. If your finding be that my client has exceeded the licence that has been tacitly granted by common consent to English literature you will be bound to condemn his book to be destroyed and himself to be punished for having issued it. If, on the contrary, you find that he has not written with more licence than the authors of the Bible or Shakespeare and the other Elizabethan poets and dramatists, the Restoration dramatists, Sterne, Fielding, Smollett, Richardson, Byron, Shelley, Swinburne—the list of names I have pronounced is by no means exhausted, I merely state those that rise up in my mind at the moment of speaking and do not pretend that I might not have made a much better selection—you will be obliged to acquit him. It cannot be maintained that there is anything in the book I am defending that exceeds the freedom of speech of certain passages which I shall read from Shakespeare and from other great writers. After reading each passage I shall challenge my learned friend to deny that it is coarser than those of which he complains, and if he cannot do so it seems to me you must acquit my client of the charge of publishing a book that will damage the moral currency, one that is harmful to the health of the race, unless, indeed, it be your opinion that everybody has written immoral books who has availed himself of a licence of speech that would not be permitted in the polite society of, shall we say, Puddleton-on-Blink. If this be your opinion, then, Gentlemen of the Jury, as honest men, you will have to bring in a rider advising the society that is prosecuting this book to prosecute also the publishers of the Bible and Shakespeare. If the book before you goes, all that I shall read to you must go too. You see the dilemma in which this Prosecution has placed you. A verdict against my client involves a condemnation of the Bible itself.

And here is another point which, perhaps, has not been considered by the members of the Vigilance Society, that the literature of all the world is to be found in the libraries founded by the State or by Mr Carnegie. The Bible can be obtained in these libraries; all of the Latin and Greek writers are on the shelves in their original texts and some in translations, and can be had for the asking. Chaucer, Suetonius, Rabelais and Shakespeare unexpurgated—think of it, unexpurgated!—and the Elizabethan poets and dramatists! What dangerous places are our libraries—what horrible snares Mr Carnegie has set for the feet of our children! Plato and Horace must go, although we compel our children to read them in our schools. All ancient authors contain passages coarser than those complained of in this book, and if my client's book be condemned you are all accessories after the fact, for you pay taxes for the purchase of Homer, Aristophanes, Catullus, and in our own time, Balzac, Flaubert, Gautier, Hugo, Zola—the works of all of these have been purchased with your money. Out of your pockets came translations of *Don Quixote* which contain many coarse passages. You shall hear the scene in the inn, Gentlemen of the Jury; you shall hear it and you will be able to say then if my client has written anything exceeding the tale of the evil-smelling servant girl who goes to meet the waggoner and slides herself by mistake into Don Quixote's bed. And many are the passages in Goethe and in Heine that you shall hear, every one of which is likely to bring down with a crash our whole social fabric. You shall hear, too, some stories from Boccaccio, and if you do not weary, some from Brantôme. A passage or two from Plato may throw some light upon this matter. An ode or two from Horace. But we will not anticipate. Now, Gentlemen, listen to some passages from Chronicles——

BALDERSTON. Objection! As Attorney for the Prosecution, I object to the dragging in of other books as immaterial and irrelevant. We are not discussing the Bible or Shakespeare or Don Quixote, but the book in the dock, and you must conduct this case according to the rules of evidence.

MOORE. My Lord [addressing my black cat, who slept like a lordship on the Woolsack], there is no accepted standard as to what whould be printed or published. No two men think alike on this subject, and no man thinks the same for any two days together. It is impossible, therefore, to try these cases as you would judge a case of theft. A man takes a pocket-handkerchief that doesn't belong to him and everybody is agreed that he shall be punished, but nobody can know what shall be printed or what shall not be printed unless a standard measure can be found. Furthermore, the laws under which this case is being tried have been applied capriciously and without regard to any standard, but there is a standard by which they ought to be applied, and the standard is

English literature, a standard based upon the practice of dozens of generations, and shall these twelve men judge my client without a knowledge of the standard? Trials at law can only be judged by precedent, and every book that by common consent has passed into English literature has gone to make up the standard of what is permissible and is a precedent in this case. If, for instance, a really indecent book were prosecuted and the jury should acquit the defendant (the jury might be composed of men without regard for public morality), the book could be sold on a barrow in the streets next day, a miscarriage of justice so shocking that the verdict of the higher courts would have to intervene, and the plea would be that books of this kind can only be judged upon precedent. Now, my Lord, I submit that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and that you must permit this book to be judged upon precedent.

Balderston. But, my Lord, even if this book does not exceed in licence books written in the past, because a crime was committed in the past with impunity it does not follow the crime should be allowed to-day. We are dealing not with the past but with the present.

Moore. My Lord, I submit that there is no past in literature till it ceases to be read, and books I have mentioned are being printed and sold and people are reading them.

Balderston. Well done, Moore. Your cross-examination of the society's secretary would be amusing.

Moore. Thank you, Balderston, for your good opinion of my forensic talents. On direct examination he would have expressed his horror at the passages complained of, and when I took him in hand I would have him tell me why he disapproved of them, leading him to exaggerate their importance, and when I had got him to say he had never seen their like in print before I would ask him if he had read the Bible, Shakespeare and Plato; he would say he had, and then it would be my pleasure to read passages from Deuteronomy, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Symposium*, and to ask him if the passages I had read did not exceed in licence any in the prosecuted book. Don't try to wriggle, I say, answer yes or no.

BALDERSTON. If you have cast me for the rôle of the secretary—I answer: they do.

MOORE. Why then do you not prosecute the publishers of these books?

BALDERSTON. The books you mention are great literature; their authors wrote better than your client, and according to the taste of their time.

MOORE. We are not here to discuss æsthetics, Mr. Balderston but morals, and as life is more important than literature I ask you to agree that if a book be harmful it should be stopped, no matter how well it is written.

BALDERSTON. I am not so sure, for good writing——

MOORE. The Bible and Shakespeare have not proved harmful, for they are well written, that is your contention; then, my Lord, I should say, turning to the judge: the witness's admissions seem to me to entail a change in the pleadings. The pleading will have to be altered that on æsthetic grounds my client's book must be condemned, but there is no law whereby a book may be burnt and its publisher punished because it is not sufficiently well written. It might be well if such a law were in existence, but I submit that no such law is in existence.

BALDERSTON. I think the judge would here take the case from the jury and throw it out of court. But if the society won and suppressed the book in question, I am sure your cross-examination would prey upon the conscience of the secretary, and lead to attacks upon the publishers of classics.

MOORE. Let us see where logic will lead the crusaders if they be sincere. We will suppose them to be prompted by the conviction that all literature containing passages such as abound in the classical writers should be condemned, and that, after becoming conscientious objectors against the payment of taxes, to support libraries where people can read Boccaccio, they have been fortunate enough to secure juries willing to condemn all the writers that the world has hitherto been in the habit of regarding with reverence, and at length had finished literature off, leaving only Miss Austen. But there are some coarse passages in Miss Austen; she talks quite openly of ladies being in the family way, and novels should be written in accordance with the most susceptible conscience. So away with her to the burning. Even then the beginning of the end will not be in sight. Our crusaders will have to proceed against all the newspapers that publish stories of the unhappy marriages the divorce court dissolves. But the suppression of the Sunday papers will not complete the task; it is possible that the most energetic, the whole hoggers, if I may express myself so, will think that to look upon the Hermes of Praxiteles will tempt a woman to leave the spouse whose shoulders do not rise to the level of her aspirations. We must, therefore, so they say, proceed against public art galleries, break up many statues, and burn pictures, for nobody can deny that some of the greatest of all paintings which hang unmolested in art galleries, to which admission is unrestricted, depict mythological subjects—the Jupiter and Antiope of Correggio in the Louvre, for example—which could not be described in English literature with the same fidelity without drawing down upon the author immediate prosecution. Yet surely to describe an action in words is one degree further removed from nature than to portray it in paint, and it would be difficult to make plain to a jury that illicit emotions may be stirred up by a written description of a statue, and of a picture, whereas the picture and the statue do not awaken any such thoughts in the beholder.

But after the closing of our public galleries of paintings and sculpture, much work still remains for our reformers to accomplish; they must go into the theatre, and every skirt must descend to the ankle of its wearer, and then they must go into society—disguised as waiters, perhaps, but they will have to attend evening parties—so that they may inform themselves regarding the modesty of the dresses that are worn. In society, ladies wear their dresses cut low, and when these are brought into court it would be very difficult to convince a jury that the ladies wearing them are not influenced by a desire to attract the opposite sex. I should plead that no book can excite such warm emotions as a lady whose dresses are cut very low, and in answer to my argument the judge would make the order that henceforth all girls must be clothed to the ears. But whether dressed or undressed, a woman's eyes, as she looks across the table, make a more insidious appeal than a library full of books. So glances must be controlled; drink and meat inflame the passions, and will have to be rationed. The crusaders will have to give ear to table talk, and produce their shorthand notes, jottings taken down as they hand the dishes. And when the danger of champagne and talk is removed, there will remain a danger which I fear the crusaders, however vigilant, will find impossible to remove—the spring days.

Balderston. Truly a grave danger, and one from which there seems to be no escape, so with your permission we will return to a subject easier of elucidation than what is to be done with the spring days—the motives actuating our social reformers. The word blackmailer I have heard pronounced by you, but you do not believe them to be all blackmailers, persecutors, hypocrites?

Moore. I do not remember using those words, but I may have implied them, therefore I hasten to say that there are many sincere people among the crusaders, sincere but misguided, possessed, once more I say it, by the absurd idea that morality depends on the last novel. No doubt there are many dupes among our social reformers. But they are not all dupes. It is difficult to believe that the secretaries and treasurers of these associations who circularise the public when they succeed in getting a book condemned are dupes. The tone of the circular they issue betrays them to those who can read between the lines, and I believe it to be important to morality as well as to literature that publishers should combine against the blackmailer. The word slips out, so inherent is it in the subject, for blackmail plays a part in the crusade, though perhaps not a very large part. The original motive is the desire to persecute; for the desire to persecute is in us all. I should like to persecute the Post Impressionists, and am glad the means to do so are not at my disposal.

Balderston. Who can say that he can withstand temptation? Increase the temptation sufficiently and every man is a sinner.

Moore. It may be doubted if tidings of a sinless diocese would awaken much enthusiasm among the higher moralists, for without sin there would be no repentance. And in what trite and lack-lustre world would the moralists find themselves, yearning by the banks of the Thames for the good old days of sin to return to them. Has it not been said that without repentance we cannot rejoice over much?

Balderston. The text you have in mind that joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance, is to be found only in Luke.

Moore. And it is unlike Jesus, altogether unlike Jesus, a wholly unacceptable text. I suspect a Bishop. But let us return to the Vigilant Society at the time of the Vizetelly prosecution, for it provides us with an exemplar that will never be surpassed, one before whom Molière's

Tartuffe sinks into insignificance—Captain Verney. Of the Captain's personal appearance a record is kept no doubt at the old Bailey, but I have not asked to see it lest it should not conform to the image I have in mind, a tall, thin man, somewhat high shoulders, breaking out into short sentences occasionally. A slightly pompous man, he must have been, for a certain pomposity was necessary to win the admiration of the entire society of which Captain Verney was a prominent member, very much looked up to by all, especially the ladies, and it is interesting, indeed instructive, to imagine the little stir that animates the committee when he enters the office and takes a chair at the long table. The members might be waiting for their secretary, who has gone to fetch a number of books in which the Captain has marked doubtful passages, passages regarding which he would like his committee to express an opinion. It is pleasant to imagine the ladies' and gentlemen's voices murmuring among themselves: how very shocking; yes, very shocking. Would you care to look at this, Mrs A., and when you've read it, will you pass it on to Mrs B., who is anxious to see it? She has heard the book spoken about. Mrs B. agrees with Mrs C., and all look up approvingly at the secretary, a short, thick-set man with a beard, and a devout expression in his eyes as he handles the suspected books. His voice, we cannot imagine it otherwise than as subdued when he tells that the unbiased opinion of the committee regarding the sad necessity of a prosecution would be of great value. To examine all the passages, to read them aloud in hushed tones, to discuss them, occupies a great deal of time, and nothing is settled definitely until Captain Verney, turning the pages quickly, murmurs: shocking, shocking; quite shocking. Then everybody knows there is to be a prosecution, and faces brighten. But Captain Verney seems perplexed and restless, and it is not long before he takes out his watch, and the thought passes round: he has gotten an appointment—which is indeed the case. I regret it, he says, but I must leave you. There is not much more to say, and we are all agreed upon the painful necessity of stopping the circulation of this filth. You have my marginal notes, and if any difficulty should arise, I shall be here to give my opinion, whatever that may be worth, next Friday. I'm sorry to have to leave you. He looks at his watch once more. As it is I shall be a few minutes late, but perhaps by taking a cab and driving quickly I may arrive in time. On these words Captain Verney goes away to keep an appointment with a lady who has many acquaintances among young nursery-maids aged from sixteen to eighteen years of age. And one day the news arrives at the office of the Vigilance Society that Captain Verney has been charged with the abduction of a young cook. It appears he took her to Paris, the secretary murmurs, in reply to questions, and the sisterhood claims that it must be a cleverly arranged plot laid by those who would obstruct us in our work; or it may be a mistake. Do you not think so, Mr. X——? The secretary shakes his head. I fear it is only too true. A few days after the magistrate sent Captain Verney for trial.

The story I'm relating came to pass not later than five and twenty years ago, and never a year goes by that I do not ponder on the psychology of the extraordinary Captain Verney, asking myself vainly how he justified himself to himself in the middle of the night when sleep was far from his eyelids. It is easy to answer that he did not try to justify himself, but it is hard for me to imagine a man leading a double life without trying to come to terms with himself, if I may so word it. A hundred times I have asked myself from what point of view he started on his extraordinary career.

Balderston. But is not your curiosity tempting you into the very sin that you deplore, taking pleasure in the punishment of the sinner, if not in the punishment, in the psychology, for in doing this are you not congratulating yourself all the while that you are not as he is?

MOORE. It has been said often that nothing in humanity should be alien to us, but this man seems further from us than anybody in history. It is true that no man knows another man, no more than the beast that he tracks in the forest or the beast that leaps on his knees as he sits by the evening fire, and that is why justice is the delusion of the imperfectly educated. I'm sorry, Balderston, if any note of jubilation appeared in my voice when I spoke of Captain Verney's downfall. If there was, I apologise to his shade. All the same it is a terrible thing that a society that counted at least one Captain Verney among its members should have been allowed to do to death poor old Henry Vizetelly.

BALDERSTON. But is there no book you would condemn, not even such as certain are given to collecting?

MOORE. We are discussing literature, not indecency, and as I have already said, there can be no excuse for mistaking one for the other; literature cannot become pornographic, for the subject of literature is the normal life of man, the commonplace, which, when enlightened by genius, becomes the universal, and there are twenty other reasons why art is never pornographic.

BALDERSTON. But tell me, do you deny that literature has any influence upon conduct?

MOORE. Life is but influences. We are influenced by all we see, hear or smell; the touch of a hand, a flower may influence our conduct, but not literature, or rarely; the appeal of literature is mainly intellectual.

BALDERSTON. You have mentioned that our public libraries contain all modern and classical writers and yet remain unmolested by the crusaders, and you know, of course, that these books in their original languages are invariably displayed openly on the shelves, together, perhaps, with Bowdlerised English translations, while complete English renderings are kept in locked cases and doled out at the discretion of the librarian to persons thought qualified to read them. If books ought not to be read in English ought they to be read by persons of superior education, when, as Gibbon remarked in prefacing that Greek footnote on the behaviour of the Empress Theodora, they are veiled in the obscurity of a learned language?

MOORE. The argument put forward by our crusaders is that licentious literature (I use the word licentious in its literal sense) appeals to the passions, inflames them and undermines the health of the nation. If that be so, why should these books be lent to educated people and not to the uneducated? Are we to assume then that education does away with the passions? Sappho did not lack education, nor did George Sand, and how many more might be mentioned; every Don Juan will tell you that the only women worth while are learned women. The question we are discussing is beset with prejudices, conventions, subterfuges and obtusities. You spoke just now of Bowdlerised versions, but Bowdlerised versions of the Bible, of Shakespeare, of Plato, are unacceptable and will always remain unacceptable, for nobody is agreed as to what should be left out and what should be retained. There is no agreement among the emendators themselves. If they were locked up in different rooms they would produce different versions of Plato, Shakespeare and the Bible, and be at quarrel the moment they were let out, and the locking up of books in the libraries to be doled out to persons qualified to read them calls up to my mind an amusing scene of a librarian questioning a girl as to her age and the education she has received, and looking into her face, trying to determine from the profile as well as from the full face whether she is qualified to read Sterne in an unexpurgated version—different expurgations set for different ages: one for fifteen, another for eighteen, another for twenty-one, and putting the same questions to a boy who saunters up while the girl is at the counter. Are the boy and girl to be called upon to affirm upon oath that they are not actuated by desire to read spicy passages, but are merely anxious to acquaint themselves with the literature of a certain period? How can the girl or boy take such an oath? They do not know why they wish to read these books; motives are complicated things; we are not governed by one motive, but by many. After scrutinising the boy's face and the girl's face, and asking himself again and again: Is this one qualified? the librarian hands *Roderick Random* to one and *The Sentimental Journey* to the other and retires to his desk, to become a prey, soon after, to scruples of conscience. Was there not a look in that girl's eye which should have made it clear to him that she was not a person whose temperament allowed her to read *The Sentimental Journey*? And the boy? Hours later he wakes up in bed with the cry; I was wrong, he was not qualified; I must get that book back in the morning! The librarian himself does not know why he reads certain books; his motives are mixed, as yours or mine are. Only God can see into the heart. My dear friend, John Eglington, could look at an applicant for ever without being able to decide what his motives were. The librarian need not trouble himself about motives as long as the applicant is content to read Boccaccio, Brantôme, Rabelais in the original: on the relation of literature to morals one can unwind for ever without coming to the end of Folly spool.

Balderston. In New York City the Anglo-Saxon attitude with which you are familiar exists side by side, and on perfectly good terms with Continental tolerance. We have in New York two millions of people who read and speak and hear in their theatres their own language, and we let them read what books and attend what plays they like, without the slightest regard for the Anglo-Saxon laws of the land, so long as they leave the English language alone; and while vigilance societies prosecute new novels in English more stringently in New York than in London, there is no book in any other language that cannot be openly displayed for sale, whatever its character, without risk of interference.

MOORE. I never heard of a prosecution being brought in London against a book in a foreign language.

BALDERSTON. The vigilance societies in New York guard that other palladium of the Anglo-Saxon race, the sanctity of the Sabbath, as closely as they preserve morality by watching over new novels in English. No Broadway theatre is permitted to perform plays on Sunday, and not long ago, when a stage society tried to put on a serious play for its own members only, on Sunday evenings, the only night when theatres and actors were available, the police, at the instance of a vigilance society, occupied the house and prevented the performance.

MOORE. I see nothing surprising in that.

BALDERSTON. Only this, that in the foreign quarter of the city, as on the Continent, Sunday is the biggest theatrical day of the week. Two performances are given, in German, Yiddish and Italian, of plays by leading European dramatists which if presented on Broadway even on weekdays would land the managers in jail, or, alternatively, in bankruptcy, and the Vigilance societies never object. It follows that what desecrates the Sabbath on Broadway does not desecrate it on the Bowery. Not only does morality, as you have said, seem to depend not upon literature but only upon literature in the English language, but our Vigilance societies also seem to be of the opinion that the Sabbath can be desecrated only in the English language.

MOORE. The smut hound gives tongue at all kinds of game; an utterly undependable cur: at this very moment he is baying in the coverts. At what? rabbit, hare or fox. Hark to Priapus! cries Mudie. At him, Libertina! shouts Smith. A mixed pack, Balderston.

CHAPTER 4.

THE most that I can hope for to relieve the monotony of Ebury Street, a long narrow slum, in which I took a house in the Coronation year, is a new idea; and one has come to entertain me to-day—namely, that the English poets have beautiful names, and the English novelists dowdy ones, all but George Meredith, who was no novelist, and will be remembered by his verses. In the discovery of a name's power Bacon was before me; for he knew the importance of a name in literature, and chose the most beautiful name of all; and with each play Shakespeare grew more and more like his name, more elusive, more recondite; and for the sake of the name let no edition of Bacon's plays be put on the market. The plays are by the name. Another name, Andrew Marvell's, might have signed the poems, but the plays and sonnets required a larger name. John Milton is a name to resound for ages, a name for a Puritan poet. And we shall have to go far afield to find a better name than Wordsworth for a pastoral poet. No name is more apt than Alfred for a Victorian poet, and it may be doubted if anyone is so blind that he cannot see that the poems are sometimes Tennyson, and sometimes Alfred, and that some are by Alfred Tennyson? Swinburne too is a significant name, and when we add the Algernon Charles Swinburne, the name is the reed through which every wind blows music. . . . *Atalanta* is by Swinburne alone, the poems and ballads are by Charles and Algernon, and the trivialities of that volume we attribute to Algernon alone.

That the name the writer bears should interpret the quality of his writing will only seem absurd to him who has never been awakened by a name, thrilled and inspired by a name as I was on the morning related in *Confessions of a Young Man*, when the family coach lumbered towards Hedford in the county of Galway, the sunlight striking through the glass, my parents sitting opposite to me, talking of a novel the world was reading, a story of a lady who married her groom because he had violet eyes, Lady Audley, who was forgotten for a while in the delight of tearing down fruit trees and chasing a cat, but my psychic eyes were all the while fixed on the book, and when we returned home I read it and its successors till I came to a book called *The Doctor's Wife*, a derivative Madame Bovary, a doctor's wife who read Shelley and Byron. His name, Shelley's, of course, burst like a star through the shades of my dreamy youth, and escaping from the schoolroom, I ransacked the library to find at last a small pocket edition, long out of print, no doubt. It opened at *The Sensitive Plant*, and to read that the young winds fed the sensitive plant seemed so wonderful that I could not be kept out of my mother's bedroom, but must needs read it to her there and then. *Queen Mab* was read by the shores of a pale green Irish lake. Byron, too, was often in my hands; and having discovered two great poets by the light of their names, it was natural that I should seek again. The name that lured me on this third time was Kirke White, and though the syllables did not promise another Shelley they led me to expect a proud and lonely spirit. Messenger after messenger was dispatched to Castlebar, urging the bookseller to inquire again for the volume. I was in the pantry waiting for my messenger to return from Castlebar with it, and seizing it, a small volume in red boards, I retired to a room at the head of the stairs. But the first stanza lacked the magic of the line: And the young winds fed it with silver dew; the second was duller than the first, and for many years Kirke White cast a doubt over, if it did not utterly destroy, my belief in name augury.

Some years after a sculptor spoke Balzac's formidable name at the door of his studio, and I felt a thrill, but, discouraged by the Kirke White episode, did not buy a French grammar and dictionary. If it had not been for thy fraudulent name, Kirke White, the reviewers would have been in the possession of an infallible guide to literature for the last five and thirty years; but for thy name they are still groping in darkness, confounding the English novel with English literature, words written yesterday, and after writing them I asked after Kirke White, for the first time, I swear it, and learnt that he was intended to be a clergyman, and died at twenty-four. A sort of Keats, I said, without Keats' talent. And fell to thinking that to die at twenty-four is a poetic act; and out of my meditation the thought arose, why it should have arisen I cannot tell, but I did say to myself: Kirke White's name is not good enough for a poet, but it might have made a good English novelist. A better name it certainly is than any we discover among our novelists—only colourless names, dry-as-dust or vulgar names like mackintoshes, names that are as squashy as goloshes. Trollope! did anybody ever bear a name that predicted a style more trollopy. Anthony, too, in front of it, to make matters worse. And Walter Scott is a jog-trot name, a round-faced name, a snub-nosed, spectacled, pot-bellied name, a placid, beneficent, worthy old bachelor name; a name that evoked all conventional ideas and formulas, a Grub Street name, a nerveless name, an arm-chair name, an old oak and Abbotsford name; a name to improvise novels, to buy farms with. Thackeray is a name for a footman; the syllables clatter like plates, and when we hear it we say: we shall want the carriage at half-past two, Thackeray.

And Dickens is a name for a page-boy, surely. And if I did not believe that Providence bestows names upon us in harmony with the books we are ordained to write, the name of George Eliot would convert me. The writer's real name was Marian Evans, a chaw-bacon, thick-loined name, but withal pleasing, redeemed by its character, like the shire horse. But the Providence that shapes the writer to its ends required a hollow, barren name, without sign of human presence upon it, one reminiscent of the strange sea-shells that are found only on the mantel-pieces of Pentonville front parlours—striped backed, white-lipped shells in which it is impossible to believe that a living creature ever dwelt. I will put it to the reader's honour. Hand on your heart, reader, could the name, George Eliot, have written Miss Austen's novels? Of course it could not, nor could a name like George Eliot have written *The Human Comedy*; certainly not, cries the truthful reader. Could any name have written *The Human Comedy* but the name that did write it: the great name designed by the writer for the work? Balzac added the particule, feeling it to be necessary for his work. No one, cries a full chorus of readers, and having thanked them for their unanimity, I continue: when I heard this sonorous name for the first time, a Cyclopean city rose up before me, outlined against rich skies mysteriously violet. Gustave Flaubert flows on the wind like a banner, and J. K. Huysmans evokes the crooked soul of middle ages. The K. carries the mind far away down the zigzagging Gothic alleys, up high stairs, at the top of which a bell-ringer sits dreaming over the music of the bells, deploring the while the difficulty of getting a fine oil for the preparation of a salad. . . . But a beautiful name was required to write stories as shapely as Greek vases, and the writer of the most comely stories in the world bore the most comely name in the world—Ivan Tourguéneff. Hearken to the musical syllables—Ivan Tourguéneff; repeat them again and again, and before long the Fates coiled in their elusive draperies in the British Museum will begin to rise up before your eyes; the tales of the great Scythian tale-teller are as harmonious as they, and we ask in vain why the Gods should have placed the light of Greece in the hands of a Scythian.

This much has been learnt in the Gosse-Moore conversations, that if an art has been given to a country in which she may express herself supremely, all the other arts are minor in that country. The genius of England went into poetry, and in the course of our literary inquest we stumbled across the curious fact that Tourguéneff failed to appreciate Balzac—a fact reported by trustworthy biographers without comment, and we are in doubt whether he thought the subject worthy of his further consideration, or whether he wished to excite our curiosity by a mere statement, as Goethe did when he said that it would have been better if Luther had never been born. But no comparison is available. Goethe's life was planned with a view to occupying the literary and scientific attention of the world for centuries: and there can be little doubt that he dreamed of the last man lighting his lamp to read the autobiography. That nobody reads I said one evening while walking home with John Eglington after the closing of the National Library, relating to him the many various studies in which Goethe spent his day: Winding up with some midwifery, John muttered contemptuously, and for no purpose but to continue a little dribble of ink in the morning.

John is wise enough to set little store on the value of writing. And in this he is like Tourguéneff, who wrote, for it was as natural for him to write as to breathe; and when he had said all he had to say about the world he had been pitchforked into he told the editor of a newspaper who had come to him for a story that he had laid down the pen for ever. He did not speak in the hope of instigating the thought that the world would henceforth be poorer; he knew the value of life, and never sought to obtain a title from the Tsar; he wore no decorations, refrained from literary banquets, and, when he went abroad, from speaking in the name of Russia. He did not try to be wise, he was wise, so very wise that he was content to be, incredible as it may seem, as wise and no wiser than nature made him. As much cannot be said of Goethe, who was not, perhaps, as pompous as George Henry Lewes makes him appear. No man, happily, was ever that, but we must not allow George Henry Lewes to divert us from our path, and to come back to it I will say that I believe that when Tourguéneff spoke depreciatingly of Balzac he said just what was in his mind, simple Slav, that he was, thinking, and thinking rightly, that his inability to appreciate Balzac's genius was not a matter worthy of many words. He knew, but he did not brood on the fact that he knew, and it was part of his genius to be able to put things aside that did not concern him, for there was a good deal more of the simple and natural, of the lilies of the field that do not toil, nor do they spin, in Tourguéneff than in Goethe, a sort of Jesus of Nazareth he was in art, who did not need to make mystery by muddying pure water as Goethe was prone to do, so that it might seem deeper than it was. Tourguéneff could be clear and deep, for he saw into nature deeply, and without trying to understand, he understood. And in this he differed from Balzac. A mighty brain Balzac's, but we are conscious that the brain is in labour; and very often it spits forth lava and ashes. But Tourguéneff's art is unconscious as nature; he makes no effort to understand life. Why should he? for he knew; and as soon as we know, effort ceases. A story that any other writer would reject as commonplace, he relates, and raises it in his relation by showing the eternal heart beating in it. To be original without being eccentric! Ah! there's the rub. There have been no other tale-tellers but Balzac and Tourguéneff, only two out of the myriad have been able to write tales that are read by succeeding generations. How very difficult tale-telling must be, for there have been many poets, many painters, many sculptors, many musicians, but there have been, I repeat, only two tale-tellers. Tolstoy writes with a mind as clear as an electric lamp, a sizzling white light, crude and disagreeable, and Flaubert's writing is as beautiful marquetry or was thought to be so once. Be this as it may, he is no tale-teller; his best books are not novels, but satires. There is Huysmans with *En Route*, and the Goncourts have written some interesting pages, which some future generation may glance at curiously. There have been men of genius who wrote novels, Dostoieffsky, for instance, but vapour and tumult do not make tales, and before we can admire them modern life must wring all the Greek out of us. His farrago is wonderful, but I am not won. Maupassant wrote perfect tales, but they are so very little.

Only a verse narrative is as difficult to write as a prose. There is but one; and drama is difficult, doubly difficult when it is in verse; and it may be argued that opera is as difficult as narrative, for no one has written many operas successfully—none, except Wagner. Mozart is next best. But what concerns us now is Balzac and Tourguéneff.

I have compared Balzac to many things at different times, I can see him now as some great conqueror—and *The Human Comedy* like a great city as we approach it extends great outlines enclosing the horizon. We are attracted by its extent, and by the vitality which animates its every part; we do not, it is true, pause anywhere to scan some perfect temple or to examine a carven portico. But what matter? we say. Does not life come before form? Life, we say, is the thing, and we argue with ourselves and ask ourselves if it is not life that we seek in our friends and acquaintances, in books, in statues and in pictures; if this be so, and who shall say it is not so, then Balzac is the greatest. He narrates the ornaments on the chimney-piece, the clock and the candelabra, and they live with strange intensity. The grey sunshade in *Un Lys dans la Vallée* lives, and with the same intensity as a sunshade painted by Manet. Twenty years ago it was opened for me. There is life in Balzac's hats and neckties, in the watch he drops into the gentleman's fob, in the rings he puts on the lady's fingers, in the buckles he stitches on her shoe, and the coat-of-arms he paints on her carriage. Balzac is life as we live it, a writer in whom we find all life; and he seems to have exhausted daily life, for the writers that have succeeded him have done no more than to lead us into some corner of his genius. Sometimes the light is that of a star, sometimes that of a lamp, sometimes that of a taper, but there is always light, and the light reveals things great or small, but there is always revelation; and if the light wanes we know it may well burn up again at any moment. Maupassant shows us human nature as beetles. He lifts a stone and the beetles run away, seeking to hide themselves. But in a tale by Tourguéneff we are with life as it exists in our own hearts—sad, unchanging, mysterious. He seems to have brought into the world a perfect comprehension of life. He did not need to learn life from experience; he knew it, and seems to have always been conscious that life is full of folly and evil; that morality is a myth, an academic discussion; and that the artist can only teach by giving the world images of beauty. He was passionately interested in the emancipation of the serfs, but he only advocated their emancipation indirectly, and in *The Memoirs of a Nihilist* he never tells the acts that caused the man to be condemned to solitary confinement; to describe his life between the four walls of his cell was enough for Tourguéneff. As I have said, this great man seems to have known from the beginning that life as we see it is but an unhappy accident; when I say life as we see it, I mean the surface of life; for few look below the surface, agitated like the surface of the sea, full of strange and cruel life, creatures preying on each other; but below the surface, in our instincts there is calm immortality, and Tourguéneff was a plunger and could read the shadowy designs that he discovered among the rocks.

It was Renan that said, and said beautifully, that a tale by Tourguéneff is the most beautiful thing that art has given since antiquity. Balzac is more astonishing, more complete, but not so beautiful; he is not so perfect; and in the same way Tourguéneff, though not so astonishing or so complete as Balzac, is more beautiful and more perfect.

There are tales that Tourguéneff calls *Dream Tales*, but all his tales were dream tales. In one of these a man wakes in the middle of the night hearing a sound, the sound of a harp-string, and a voice tells him to go next evening to the blasted oak by the edge of the common. He goes, and meets a phantom, and the phantom tells him not to be afraid; and they fly over the world and see many things. It seemed to me, and it seems to me still, that in this tale we are taken to the verge of life; we seem to look over the very edge; we feel that the great secret is going to be revealed to us. In *The House of Gentlefolk* a man has made an unfortunate marriage. His wife has lovers, and he leaves her; years pass and he hears she is dead; he believes her to be dead, and meeting a girl who loves him and whom he loves, it is agreed that they shall marry. But the wife returns, and the girl tells the man that he must go back to his wife. No more than that, and it would be hard to find a subject more trite, more commonplace, one that the man of talent would certainly disdain; yet it is out of this trite and commonplace material that genius speaks in telling how Lavretsky comes back after many years and finds a new generation. The garden is changed; trees have grown, and the young people want to play hide-and-seek; but the melancholy man intimidates them, and sitting on the seat where he sat with Liza, he begs of them to go to play. We old people, he says, have a resource which you don't know yet, and which is better than any amusement—recollection.

On the Eve tells the same tale. The young girl is the same age as Liza, and her parents are thinking of her marriage. Young men come to the house—artists, politicians and professors. A professor speaks to her about Goethe; the artist laughs at him. Helen says: Why not? And at that moment we begin to know her. That Why not? is as extraordinary as any one of the motives in *The Ring*. An hour later we see her sitting by her window facing the summer night. She feels something holy half rising out of, half falling into, her heart, and we know her to be the eternal maiden—she who looked at the stars ten thousand years ago, and who will look at them ten thousand years hence, after a talk with a professor of literature; but her fated lover is a Bulgarian, the professor's friend. I am not willing to tell the story that Tourguéneff tells, and love it well enough to refrain. So go to it, reader, and find in it the joy that I found in it. But I shall not look into it again, for it may not be the book that I love but my memory of it. Like Lavretsky, I indulge in recollections, but this much I will say, that none will ever tell the tale of love's delight as well again. Helen holds happiness to her breast amid a Venetian spring, and happiness passes from her as the season passes, her fate affecting us as no personal misfortune can affect us; for when her lover dies she goes we know not whither, but we hear her cry in the wilderness, and we see her lonely as Hagar amid the rose granite rocks of Arabia under a lowering sky.

Tourguéneff wrote a story called *Spring Floods.* In it a man is about to marry a beautiful girl, but he meets the temptation that haunts all Tourguéneff's stories and wastes his life following her. The story is as beautiful as his other stories, but Tourguéneff did not think it sufficiently perfect in outline and strove to perfect the outlines in a novel called *Smoke*, losing thereby some of the fresh colour of the earlier tale.

The beginning of *Smoke* is, however, one of the most memorable things in Tourguéneff. A student is spending his holidays in Baden-Baden, and a Russian countess calls at the young man's hotel, and not finding him in she leaves a bouquet of heliotrope for him. He puts the flowers in a glass of water and sits down to write letters. But the suave, subtle odour disturbs him, like something half remembered, half forgotten. He puts the glass away, finishes his letters and goes to bed. But the suave, insinuating odour follows him into the next room and under the bed-clothes.

There is a story of a man who hears a woman singing in Sorrento. He is in the street, and the windows of a house are open, and a beautiful voice singing some melody of Schubert or Schumann floats out into the night air. He hears the voice again on the steppes in Russia, and he meets the singer afterwards in a ballroom in Moscow. I remember no other fact. I only remember the emotion, the evocation of an immortal yearning by a voice heard in the streets of Sorrento, heard afterwards on the steppes in Russia. There is, of course, some mysterious correspondence between her appearance in Sorrento and her reappearance on the steppes. The mystery of these hauntings is implicit in their mysterious reoccurrence; the same temptation occurring again, amid other circumstances, leads to a belief in an eternal return, in a fate from which we cannot fly, it being part of ourselves. In ancient Greece and Italy men met it in the woods; they spied a glittering breast between the leaves and were for ever after unable to love mortal woman. They knew the malady by the beautiful word nympholepsy. The ancient woods are now empty of dryad and nymph, but the disease is with us still. Nor is it necessary to go to Sorrento to find it: many a man has found it amid the artificial glades of painted canvas. A nymph flying through the limelight has inspired as deep a passion as a nymph flying through the reeds. I have known such a one. The victim sat out a melodrama a hundred times for her sake. They only met once face to face, and then only for a minute. Her marriage and her death might have inspired Tourguéneff. But he wrote her story! I remember a story by Tourguéneff, of a little clerk who went to hear an actress sing. The actress wrote to him, and the pathos in Tourguéneff's story lies in the fact that the little clerk was loved when he thought he was being laughed at. Tourguéneff speaks of the fish that swims to and fro under the boat apparently at liberty, though the hook is in its gills. Ah, he knew the disease in its several symptoms, and he was at once the victim and the perfect chronicler of the disease.

Whitman spoke of Tourguéneff as the noble and melancholy Tourguéneff, and no words could describe him better. He also spoke of Tourguéneff as a most wonderful tale-teller, and the choice of the words proves Whitman to have been an artist even in his casual talk. The choice of the word proves that he understood Tourguéneff as well as I understood Corot, and when I wrote my first article about Tourguéneff many years ago I said: These tales come from the East; he told tales, and we write only psychological novels. I expressed myself badly, for I then only had an inkling of the beauty I have learnt, and that I am still learning to comprehend—a tale by Tourguéneff and a landscape by Corot.

Balzac and Wagner have exalted me; I have joined in the processional crowds, and have carried a blowing banner. My life would have been poor without them, but neither has been as much to me as Tourguéneff and Corot. They have been and still are the holy places where I rested and rest; together they have revealed to me all that I needed to know. For all things are contained in them. He who has seen Corot has seen all the universe, for could we find in the farthest star anything more beautiful than evanescent cloud and a nymph gathering summer blooms by the edge of a lake? A cloud floats and goes out, and the blossoming wood is reflected in the lake; and lo! he has told us the tale of a spring morning. All the outward externalities of nature which Rousseau sought vainly to render, Corot knew how to put aside. He knew that they were but passing things, just as Tourguéneff knew that all the trivial disputes of the day are not worthy to make art, and these twin souls, the most beautiful ever born of woman, lived in the depths where all is still and quiet; where the larch bends, and the lake mirrors a pellucid sky; where a man longs for a woman that has been taken from him; where a woman holds her desire to her breast for a moment, loses it, and is heard of in Bulgaria as a nurse, or is heard of as a Sister of Charity, but about whom nothing certain is known.

That Tourguéneff loved Corot, I think; and Monet loves Corot, for he told me; he loves too, Balzac, and they are alike in this: neither had a point of view; and perhaps this was why Corot did not like Monet any better than Tourguéneff liked Balzac.

CHAPTER 5.

ONE morning, while thinking of Tourguéneff, my thoughts were interrupted by the galloping of a horse. A runaway, I cried; and, for no traceable reason, fell to wondering if the cab were bringing me a Russian visitor. Sir, a gentleman wishes to see you. What is his name? I can't pronounce it, sir; it's a foreign name; but it ends in off. And while my visitor was taking off his hat and coat in the ante-room I waited, asking myself who this friend of Tourguéneff's might be. I'm afraid my servant's pronunciation of Russian names is defective; I did not catch—— He mentioned his name, and I knew him to be one of Tolstoy's critics, and one of Tourguéneff's translators. I've come, he said, to ask if you will give me an interview, and if you will tell me what you think of—— Tourguéneff? I interrupted. No; to ask you to tell me what you think of Tolstoy's latest declaration regarding art and the objects of art, he replied. Would your purpose not be equally well suited if I were to tell you what I thought of Tourguéneff's article on Don Quixote and Hamlet? All you say would be interesting, no doubt, he answered, on that or any other subject, but you see I am collecting the opinions of writers, painters and musicians regarding Tolstoy's latest declarations. You have read the book, *What is Art?*

Of the book I knew nothing but the name, but I continued to talk about Tolstoy, hoping all the while that the conversation would turn on Tourguéneff. For it could not be else. Of this I felt sure, that my visitor, having known Tourguéneff, could doubtless tell me about the packet of love letters that had been discovered lately—love letters addressed to Madame Viardot. But it was hard to lead him away from Tolstoy. He began again and again:

Tolstoy's argument is, that if a man infects another with a feeling that he has experienced, he has produced a work of art. And he concludes, no doubt, I chimed in, that the best art is the art that communicates the best ideas, the best ideas being, of course, Tolstoy's ideas. My visitor protested, but I would not hear any further explanation. If you'll allow me, I'd prefer to speak of Tolstoy's novels. Do you admire them? he asked, and on my telling him that I did, he begged me to tell him why I admired Tolstoy's novels, and within three minutes my conversation was indistinguishable from what one reads in the newspapers. I'm afraid you've heard all I'm saying before? And his manner signified that he had. I daresay you have, I continued, for I'm not saying what I really think. I admire Tolstoy; but if I only dared—— I beg of you, he interrupted. Well, I continued, Gautier used to boast that the invisible world was visible to him, but to no one was it ever so visible as it is to Tolstoy. His eyesight exceeds all eyesight before or since. At this point I paused, and my visitor and I sat looking at each other, myself very much abashed. Pray go on, said he; for I am wondering if your conclusion will be the same as Tourguéneff's. He once spoke to me in much the same way. Now you frighten me, and I can say no more until you tell me what Tourguéneff said. I will not tell you what Tourguéneff said until you conclude. What is your conclusion? That Tolstoy is not a great psychologist, I answered tremblingly, for when he comes to speak of the soul he is no longer certain; he doesn't know. But I'm saying something that no one will agree with, that no one has ever said. You're repeating what Tourguéneff said to me, said my visitor. He used nearly the same words in speaking of Tolstoy. Is that so? Is that really so? You've no idea what a pleasure it is to me to hear that on the subject of Tolstoy's genius Tourguéneff and I—would you mind repeating what you have just said? Is it really true that——?

He assured me that it was really true, and in the course of conversation the interviewer told me about the love letters and the suppressions that were made in them, that a passage was deleted in which Tourguéneff expresssed a wish he were the carpet under her feet, for Madame Viardot feared that it might lead readers to think she had been Tourguéneff's mistress. But of course she was, and to her very great honour, I cried. Why else should we be talking about her? Tell me more, my visitor, and my visitor told me he had made all the suppressions she asked, but had deposited the complete manuscript in La Bibliothèque Nationale. I only obtained her consent to the publication by assuring her that if she did not give it the story of her friendship with Tourguéneff would be lost for ever—her grandchildren would certainly oppose the publication. She wished for the honour of his bed, but would like the i's to remain undotted. Just so, my visitor answered, and the conflict in her mind was plain in her face. I could have gone on talking for hours about her, but my interviewer pressed me for information regarding Tolstoy's popularity in England, and it seemed shameful that my part of the conversation should be limited to such matters as that it was the late Mr Vizetelly who had introduced Tolstoy to the English public, and that the translation he had issued was a revised version of an American translation. We talked of the difficulties of the translation, and I learnt that Tourguéneff had always been fortunate in the matter of translation. His *Liza* had been excellently well done into English by Mr R. S. Ralston, and from a copy that Tourguéneff had specially revised for the purpose, and then, catching enthusiasm from the theme, I told him that it was not the poverty of the translation that stood between Tourguéneff and popular appreciation in England but the noble simplicity of his stories. However deep the water may be, I said, the public cries: It is but a shallow if the water be clear. We must stir up the mud to deceive the public. I told him that Mr Vizetelly also published *Crime and Punishment*, and we fell to criticising the critics. The critics were awed by the length of the Russian novel. *Crime and Punishment* is no longer than any modern English novel, and *War and Peace* is the longest novel ever written if we except *Les Miserables*. But the larger part of *Les Misérables* is history. True that there is some history in *War and Peace*, but Napoleon's battles are not so plainly extraneous, so independent of the characters in the novel, as Victor Hugo's rhetorical descriptions of Waterloo.

The conversation paused, and, fearing that my visitor would leave me, I began to argue that Tolstoy's realism and ethics were the cause of his popularity. A popular novel is a compound of amusement and admonition, and the most popular are those in which clowning is sandwiched with preaching; a sudden somersault or a crude exhortation will draw a crowd. But few care to listen to the poet. Verlaine and Tourguéneff only gathered few disciples during the term of their natural lives, but henceforth they will find disciples in every generation; in a hundred years many more will have listened to them than ever listened to the clown or the preacher. In time the greater writer is read by the greater number. Beautiful rhythms acquire more subtle enchantments as the years go by, whereas the coarser rhythms of the preacher and clown interest only a single generation—not always even so long; the preacher and the clown often live to see their followers leave them, attracted by new doctrines and new somersaults. So did I talk. In the presence of an interviewer we remember all our aphorisms and serve them up again to convince him of our great wit and wisdom; and an answer I once made the late

Mr Henley was brought in cleverly as a sort of Parthian shaft. Mr Henley has once said to me: Tolstoy could wear Tourguéneff on his watch-chain, and I answered: The trinket on the watch-chain is often more valuable than the chain. But my visitor was not brought to bay as I expected he would be, and I allowed him to leave, promising, however, to meet him in Paris. Meanwhile I would read *What is Art?* He would not be sending his copy to the printer before the end of the month, etc., etc.; and immediately after I heard the sound of galloping hooves and began to think that perhaps my visitor had come in a droshky; and so real was the belief that I did not dare to look out of the window lest I should be disappointed.

The fire was burning brightly, and there were many things to think about: the delicious flattery that my thoughts had once moved along the same plane as Tourguéneff's, the love letters, and then Tolstoy himself, who, after all, was worth while thinking about. And now or never was the time to come to say real, vital things about Tolstoy, things worthy of myself, things surpassing anything Henley could have said, and so I fell to thinking, saying to myself: in the nineties we were all cowed by the spell of realism, external realism, myself less than Henley for there had always been misgivings, even Tourguéneff's praise of Tolstoy failing to convince me. And I pondered that, however deep the spell he casts upon us, the sensation he communicates is a harsh one, even ugly. His breath is a blast from the north, but Tourguéneff breathes like the south wind always; even on his deathbed he could write to Tolstoy:

DEAREST LYOF NIKOLAIEVITCH,—It is long since I wrote to you. I have been in bed, and it is my deathbed. I cannot get well; that is no longer to be thought of. I write to you expressly to assure you how happy I have been to be your contemporary, and to present to you a last, a most urgent request. Dear friend, come back to literary work! This gift came to you whence all gifts come to us. Ah! how happy should I be if I could think that you would listen to my request. My friend, great writer of our land of Russia, grant me this request.

The letter is extraordinary—even in this somewhat frigid, somewhat partial translation—the French translation contains more lines than this one, but I cannot lay hands on it at this moment, but I remember that Tourguéneff says, in a last sentence, that he can write no more. The letter was unfinished, but it betrayed, it is true, a hope that in health he would not have indulged in, that Tolstoy might change his destiny, which, notwithstanding many marvellous gifts, was clearly set in the direction of morals and doctrinal inquiry. For knowing human life to be a sordid story, he knocked at a Jewish door; or shall I say, at a Syrian Greek door, whereas Tourguéneff's more sensuous temperament allowed him to see life beautiful: and whosoever would do this must stint himself of everything but exhibition, for though the artist may teach, it must be indirectly; with beautiful images and ideas he may draw men's minds from baser things. Man is made of many needs, I murmured to myself, and one of these is beauty, as I bent over the fire. But Tolstoy looks upon art as a means whereby we communicate our ideas. My visitor admitted that Tolstoy repudiate beauty. But it is impossible to write the simplest sentence without some rudimentary sense of rhythm? Rhythm is beauty. His ugly temperament intervenes between him and his intelligence. That is it, I said, throwing myself back in my arm-chair in my low-ceilinged room so that I might meditate better. The beauty, I said, that I recognise in *War and Peace* is the vast architecture, the number of characters all going hither and thither, each on an errand big or little, the multiplicity of events, all perfectly controlled by one central purpose. *War and Peace* may be compared to the canvases of Tintoretto and Veronese, I muttered, and a moment after, the accidental phrase—his temperament is an ugly one—led me to consider *War and Peace* from a different point of view, and I said to myself: No comparison between Tolstoy and the great pagans of the sixteenth century is valid, for their temperaments were not as ugly as their palettes tell us, but if we forget the design of *War and Peace*, and consider Tolstoy's palette, we find upon it very little else but black and white. It is true that Rembrandt's portrait of his wife, the one that hangs in the Louvre, is but bitumen and white faintly tinted with bitumen, a little rose madder showing in the cheeks? But no comparison between Rembrandt's palette and Tolstoy's is possible. There is nothing on the Russian's but a thin grey, and it might be truer to compare his designs to Kaulbach's than to Tintoretto's. But to be just we will admit without equivocation that his drawing is far in advance of Kaulbach's; it is that, but, all the same, it lacks what is known in the studios as quality; the quality of the original should transpire in the translation to some extent, and if we have to think of him as a painter I must think of him as a designer of vast cartoons moral as Kaulback's, with, say, here and there such a well-observed piece of drawing as we meet with in Sir John Millais in his Pre-Raphaelite days? In these early days Millais was always beautiful. I am afraid these comparisons are not very happy, and yet——

However, the first two volumes are filled with pictures—that is to say, scenes taken from life, if I may be permitted to use an expressive colloquialism; and in reading them the reader must be a very casual reader indeed if he does not ask himself if it was Tolstoy's intention to transcribe the whole of life. His intention seems certainly to have been to include all the different scenes that come to pass in civilised life, and no doubt he ran them over in his mind: a scene of ladies in a drawing-room, taking tea, is followed by a scene in a ballroom with ladies dancing, and this is followed by a scene in a barrack-room with a quarrel among the officers. The first volume of *War and Peace* reminds one of a picture gallery of second-rate Dutch pictures, for there are sledging, skating and hunting scenes, and every scene is described by an eye that sees clearly, and after some twenty or thirty scenes executed in the dry and angular manner of Meissonier we begin to weary and to long for chapters in which there are no pictures, for beauty, for charm, for meditation. We turn the pages; but alas, there are more pictures, and curiosity taking the place of sensible pleasure, we ask ourself if Tolstoy has omitted some description of a yacht race, for instance.

The book is long, but even if it were twice as long, if it were three times as long, there would always be scenes that have been omitted, and these Tolstoy, waking up in the middle of the night, must have regretted. There must have been a night in which it occurred to him that he had not included a yacht race, and another night when he awoke, screaming: I forgot high Mass, and sinking back on his pillow he tried to find consolation in the thought that he had described many religious ceremonies, with the same minuteness as a traveller would the religious rites of a newly discovered people. No writer ever tried harder to compete with Nature than Tolstoy. Yet he was a clever man, and must have known that he would be beaten in the end; but he is one of those men to whom everything is plain and explicit except the obvious, and *War and Peace* is so plainly the work of a man with a bee in his bonnet that, despite the talent manifested in every description, we cannot help comparing him to a swimmer in a canal challenging a train going by to a race. The reader is at first interested and then amused, but before the end of the second volume he wearies of the absurd competition and lays down the book, and will never take it up again unless mayhap somebody tells him the scene in which Prince Andrei lies wounded on the battle-field, looking at the stars. That is how it came to pass that I picked up the book, and while seeking out the scene of Prince Andrei's death I read the whole of the battle of Borodino, marvelling greatly at the ceaseless invention with which Tolstoy takes Pierre from one regiment to another, from tent to tent, showing us what is happening at every part of the immense battle, explaining the different plans of the Russian generals. Now the battle of Borodino is as interesting as a newspaper, as casual life is, but Prince Andrei's death is eternal life, and we do not come upon life again in any eternal aspect until Pierre is taken prisoner and forced to follow the French army from Moscow. He meets a peasant philosopher on the way who has a little pink puppy (the puppy generally runs on three legs), and it is during the retreat from Moscow that we begin to understand that the hero of the book is Destiny. For everyone in the book set out to do something, and everybody does something, but no one does what he set out to do; and we marvelled greatly how Tolstoy could have described all the things he described in the first volume without once communicating the idea that must have been at the back of his mind. He gathers up his threads in the fourth volume very neatly: Natasha abandons her sensuous, frivolous girlhood, and becomes extraordinarily interested in her babies, even in their disgusting little ailments; we assist at the sinking into old age of the generation we knew in middle age in the first volume; we catch sight of the young people whom we knew in the first volume sinking into middle age, and though some years have gone by since I read the book, I still remember Natasha's brother standing on the balcony watching the small rain that the thirsting oats are drinking up greedily, thinking that he must be, after all, no more than a commonplace man who married an ugly princess.

Pierre too has lost some of his illusions, but not all: he still goes up to St Petersburg to attend spiritualistic *séances*, but now he is only faintly interested in spiritual things, and for this knowledge of himself and that life will know no further change for him, we must look upon Pierre as Tolstoy's one creation, if he be a creation. But what do we mean by a creation? Let the word pass; for what we have to decide is if Pierre be an entity in the sense that Bazaroff, or Insarov, or the would-be Nihilist in *Virgin Soil* are entities; if his foolish humanity can be compared with Bazaroff's pessimism; and if Natasha's interest in her children's ailments express life as intensely as Rudin's in the story that bears his name, or Helen's courage in *On the Eve*.

When we see the volumes of *War and Peace* on the table, they seem to us as long as life itself, and we go on reading them as we go on living, and we remember them only as little, notwithstanding the time we spent reading them. As soon as we lay the books aside Tolstoy's characters begin to recede, and distance reveals the barrenness of the ways that we walked in, and the very contrary seems to me to be true about Tourguéneff. It is true that the very size of his books prevents us from believing them to be great books; they seem merely pretty stories, somewhat slight, and it is not until long afterwards that their beauty appears, distance lifting Liza, Lavretsky and Helen out of the circumstances in which Tourguéneff places them. It is not for many years after that we begin to recognise them as typical of all that the heart ponders and remembers; the difference between the men is immense. Tolstoy is lord over what is actual and passing; he can tell better than anybody how the snipe rise out of the marsh, and the feelings of a young man as he looks at a young girl and desires her, but his mind rarely reaches a clear conception of a human soul as a distinct entity; his knowledge of the soul, except in the case of Pierre, is relative and episodic. And the house he built reminds one somewhat of a palatial hotel where everything is supplied except beauty. All kinds of different people are met with in the passages. There is a central hall with dinner-parties going up the staircase; the building is lit with electric light; there are bands and winter gardens. Tolstoy's book is terribly nineteenth century, but Tourguéneff's House of Gentlefolk is much older; as soon as it comes into view we feel that it is part of the landscape, so long has it stood there. It seems as if it had always been inhabited by the same people; generations of the same family must have lived in it, and these have given the house its character. It contains but a dozen or fifteen rooms, twenty at most, but every room bears the trace of him or her who lived in it. A water-colour drawing of an old-time mill tells the story of somebody gone; a collection of shells tells another story; the furniture was not all brought together at one time; the house breathes the story of the four or five people who sit in its rooms and walk in its garden. There is no sense of home in Tolstoy; he is mainly engaged in telling the stories of the visitors who go up and down the staircase and gather to hear the band in the winter gardens. The country house has its own story; the hotel furnishes no commanding story, only episodes.

Helen, in *On the Eve*, goes out to life with both hands open to grasp it; but what she grasps are the hands of a consumptive man. I do not know, and no one will ever know, if Tourguéneff intended to contrast Liza, who shrinks from life, daring hardly a glance, with Helen, who grasps life so eagerly and passionately that life extinguishes in her grasp. A writer is not conscious of the whole of his idea, some part of it exists only in his subconsciousness; but Tourguéneff was a subtle thinker, and though the idea is only indicated, and will not be perceived by the casual reader, yet it is difficult to feel sure he was not aware of it. If he were not aware of it, Insarov was consumptive merely because Tourguéneff wished a tragic end to his love story—an unpinning of plot that few will deem consistent with Tourguéneff's genius; and if the alternative be accepted, it will be allowed that no writer has woven so delicate a thread into his woof of story, not since the Greeks certainly. And our thoughts striking at random we are tempted to think that *On the Eve* is a last effort of Greek genius risen after centuries in the Crimea. Did not whisper once reach me that Tourguéneff came from the Crimea, once a Greek colony?

CHAPTER 6.

IT has been admitted, it is true with some reservations, that *War and Peace* reminds us of the great canvases of Tintoretto and Veronese, but let it not be forgotten that the minds of the great Venetian artists were unburdened with any idea but beauty, and that we followed Napoleon's army from Moscow to the frontiers of Russia, learning the great plains of Russia as from a map, a wonderful vision, or, shall we say, a seeing but with no story in it, for no one has suffered in his heart and no one has dreamed, which brings us to an important point, that Tolstoy was not a natural tale-teller. He might have been, or anything else in literature had he chosen, so extraordinary were his gifts. But his object was to rid himself of all sense of beauty, to crush it out of his heart; his whole life was a long preaching against beauty; beauty was the original sin and he hated it with the hatred of the ancient Jew. He reviled it, he spurned it, he spat upon it. He cried from the steppes: let it be burned up like stubble. A veritable Jeremiah of the steppes whose hatred of beauty can only be explained by the supposition of some recrudescence of the Jew in him. A mere fancy this suggestion is, but no better proof of any sort can I put forward in support of it but his art. Art, like the microscope, reveals many things that the naked eye does not see, and Tolstoy's art is as cosmopolitan as the art of the modern Jew. If we consider it we notice at once that it lacks original form, recalling in many ways English and French fiction. The composition of *Anna Karena* seems to be derived from the English novel, and its realism suggests a French source; just as we have a family divided into four parts in *Vanity Fair*, we have a family divided into four parts in *Anna Karena*, and the different threads are picked up in the fourth volume in much the same way, and the descriptive writing in this novel and in the novel that preceded it, *War and Peace*, recalls the realism of Flaubert. *Madame Bovary* was published in '57. *War and Peace* was published in '60. Most of it must have been written in '57, which destroys any theory that can be put forward of Tolstoy's indebtedness to the Frenchman. All the same there is much that recalls Flaubert, and though we prefer Tolstoy's writings to Flaubert, it would seem to us, if we do not know the dates, that Tolstoy had gotten a hint from Flaubert. But to set aside the possibility of this we must perforce fall back upon Balzac as having suggested the realism of both Tolstoy and Flaubert, a suggestion that does not seem to me very valid, but I cannot put forward anything better to-day, and am perplexed by the numerous and implicated sources of Tolstoy's art. The nearest thing to truth that can be said about it is that it arose in the middle of the nineteenth century in Western Europe, and represents in art the scientific ideas of Taine, Herbert

Spencer and Darwin. With this difference, however, that Tolstoy was unwilling to believe that when he wrote *War and Peace* man's origin was merely the survival of the fittest. He was, however, impressed by the notion that if you would understand the insect, you must understand the leaf upon which the insect lives. It was out of such scientific beliefs that the elaborate descriptions of Madame Bovary arose, and it is hard for me to believe that they were not shared by Tolstoy, for how else can we account for the fact that his realism so often reminds us of a lady dressed in the French fashion for 1870 going out for a walk on the steppes. We can, however, regard *War and Peace* with kinder eyes, discovering in it the realism of children—the realism of the early Italian painters who stop at the wayside to tease a beetle, to investigate a bush. We may do this, for it would not surprise me at least if some part of its realism is a folk inheritance; it would be strange if the element of folk did not exist in the work of a *muzhik* who had read Western literature and science; and it may be that incidentally we are on the trail of a new idea, that art is always rising out of folk-lore—the romantic spirit, and that classic art is a shedding of the folk-lore element, for whereas Flaubert described Madame Bovary's house because she lived there always, Tolstoy described an inn through which some travellers pass, telling, among many other things, the number of freckles on the nose of the servant girl who brings in the samovar. Yes; his realism is as irrelevant as that of the painter Pinturicchio, who introduced quails picking grain about the embowered throne of the virgin surrounded by saints and angels.

Argument as to what is romantic and what is classical art has filled the reviews for a century or more, without the difficulty showing any signs of clearing up. But it has come to seem to me that if we were to substitute the words folk and culture for the words romantic and classical we should be in the straight way towards apprehending what is really meant by the words classical and romantic. Art begins in the irresponsible imaginations of the people, like a spring in a mountain waste; the spring rises amid rocks, trickles and forms a rivulet, swells into a stream, and after many wanderings, perhaps after a brief sojourn in artificial ponds and basins, it returns to the earth whence it came. And if this be the natural history of art, Homer is art emerging out of folk, and Sophocles is art at the extreme point of culture—the point at which art must begin to decay. In Shakespeare we find culture and folk side by side; and sometimes, as in *Hamlet*, we assist at the shearing away of the folk element from the tale. *As You Like It* is folk in substance; the various dukes and the forest denizens are pure folk; but the writing is culture. To pass from literature to painting, we stop before Pinturicchio, who seems to us a very tale-teller among people emerging from the religious gloom of the Middle Ages; we might almost call him the pavement artist of an artistic period; we find him in the midst of religious processions, in narrow Gothic streets, always delightfully spontaneous, telling tales of saints and miracles, and always heedless of culture—that is to say, of proportions and anatomies. Culture enters in the person of Botticelli; he represents it in its first stage and Raphael represents it in its last, just before art began to slip into decadence.

Perhaps better than literature or painting, architecture will enable me to show how art is always rising out of folk and descending into culture. The Irish Romanesque chapels are examples of pure folk, and the Gothic cathedrals are examples of pure culture, but while the architecture of Chartres is pure culture, the sculpture on its walls is folk. The argument might be prolonged almost indefinitely, but it is germane to the explanation of Tolstoy's realism, that while in Italy, art progressed gradually from folk into culture—we note every change, its beautiful progression from Pinturiccho to Michelangelo, how it paused, how Raphael marked the pause, and how it declined from Raphael to the Carracci's in Russia, owing, perhaps, to the rapid transmission of ideas by means of newspapers and railways, art, folk and culture, was pitched pell-mell. Tolstoy is but a Tartar hungering for the desert, and reminds us in more than one photograph of a Hebrew prophet, and in one extraordinary photograph he has all the appearance of Jeremiah, the lean gesticulations, the perfervid eyes. And looking at it we hear the harsh admonition: I stand on the brink of the grave, and can have no interest in telling you lies. Repent, even if there be no God; repent, even if the kingdom of heaven be illusory; renounce the kingdom of earth, for it is worthless.

CHAPTER 7.

NO man ever walked in the wrong road as well as Tolstoy, and that he never fell into the right one is a pity, for his step is alert and vigorous, and would have carried him into works of the highest genius. But since the quality of genius is an instinctive knowledge of the road we find ourselves being pressed towards the paradox that Tolstoy is not a man of genius, a paradox as unreasonable as many of Tolstoy's own; he sought reason eagerly, but his search only led him into paradox, for he failed to apprehend that there are two reasons—man's little reason within him, and the greater reason outside of him, call it Providence, God, call it what you will, but the fact is clear to everybody that the world is not governed by our reason, and Tolstoy wished it otherwise. Another thing he could not understand: that the charm of life is in the fact it is always going by us, and this stint in his nature drove him into theory; continual, uninterrupted theory from the moment he put pen to paper, and his life must have been theory even before he began to write. Theory began to appear in his book about the Caucasus, and that was a young man's book; and theory rose its head unabashed in its first great work, *War and Peace.* In the first volume it begins to appear intolerable to Tolstoy that a man whose profession was war should stand before the world as a man of genius; and to destroy the Napoleonic legend was the root idea of *War and Peace,* rather than the exhibition of man in the enigma of his instincts. He is at pains to tell us, in the second or third volume, that Napoleon's personality counted for little or nothing, and that his wars were merely forces of nature driving men alternately eastward and westward. He would even persuade us that the Russian General who refused to follow up Napoleon's retreat was a man of extraordinary genius; his dilatoriness is extolled as a virtue, and he is held up to our admiration as one of the wise fools who, knowing that the hand of Providence is everywhere, is content to allow Providence to work for them. In his next book, *Anna Karena,* he walks in the wrong road as well as he did in *War and Peace,* for it was written to prove that if a woman lives unhappily with one husband, and leaves him for the man she loves, her moral character will disintegrate; and he foresees no end for her but suicide, thereby showing that his theories do not even emerge from facts well observed and collated, but out of mere prejudices. If he had only bethought himself of consultation with a girl of fourteen, saying to her: tell me, my dear child, what you think. If a woman were to leave her husband whom she detests, and went to live with a man she loved, do you think she would be unhappy? The child of fourteen would answer: if the man she loved were kind to her, I suppose she would be happy with him. Or if Tolstoy had only thought of consulting the china bowl in the hall, into which visitors' cards are thrown, he would have learnt the truth, for his wife could not have been always without friends who were very unhappy in their first marriage (dissolved through the action of the Divorce Court) and happy in their second.

After writing *Anna Karena*, the moral pack always on his trail began to give tongue again, and he tells us how he was forced to write a book entitled *My Religion*, and the book is in some ways a more interesting one than any of Tolstoy's novels, for Tolstoy was not a liar by nature, lies did not appeal to him, though he was a terrible liar, and it could not be else, for he desired a reasonable world above all things—reasonable according to his reason, and *War and Peace* and *Anna Karena* are examples of the lies a too ardent desire of truth led him into. But in *My Religion* he is not beset by theory and half-beliefs; he is concerned to relate himself, and he tells the battle between an extraordinary clear intelligence and an extraordinarily powerful temperament as it has never been told before. His intelligence compels him to admit there is no grounds for believing in the Gospels, but though the Gospels may be fabrications, the Gospel teaching is essential. If he had said essential to me he would have written a better book, but he will have it that the teaching in the Gospels is essential to the world, and almost anybody could have told Tolstoy that Christianity was found to be incompatible with life in the second century, and that the business of the Church was to adapt Christianity to life. In the adaptation the mysteries of Ceres were abolished, but evening parties received the sanction of the Church, if not in the second, at least some centuries later, and this almost initial mistake on the part of the Church estranged Tolstoy from his Church; one so hopelessly intelligent as Tolstoy could not do else than regard such religion as essentially unintelligent, and what is worse, unmoral, and having discovered in his memories of his youth that the pleasure we derive from evening parties is directly or indirectly a sexual pleasure, he proceeded to write a story about an evening party, and, as is usual with him, he brings to his job all the extraordinary literary skill that he brought into the world, and it enabled him to devise a fine setting for a story that might have frightened the austere St Jerome, who wrote in a sudden ecstasy: Fornication is a dung-heap, marriage is barley, chastity is wheaten-flour.

The teller of Tolstoy's new story is a man who murdered his wife because he committed the fatal mistake of falling in love with her at an evening party, her pretty figure, which a jersey showed off to considerable advantage, being the active cause of the wedding. He tells his story to an innocent passenger in the train: that he loved and hated his wife by turns, and that at last she could bear with him no longer and took to herself a lover, a violinist by profession, one of the concomitants of evening parties, as are immodest gowns, sandwiches and wine. A man must be a man of genius to get the world to listen to such stories, but to continue. Having gotten her lover, a violinist, she does exactly what most women would do in her circumstances, she gives an evening party, and at this party a piece of music was performed by the violinist, and the wife, who excelled at the piano, especially in a piece called the *Kreutzer Sonata*, one more or less known to all cultivated people and looked upon by them as a natural and witty piece of music, in the humour of a Shakespearean comedy. In no other way do we look upon the *Kreutzer Sonata*, yourself and myself, dear reader; but the murderer, speaking through Tolstoy, heard a violent aphrodisiac in the music, and was at last driven to killing his wife with a stiletto, driving it through and through the jersey which had provoked his love of her.

Every jot of Tolstoy's ugly temperament went into the composition of this book. His intelligence, which is great, must have fought a fierce battle with his temperament, which is strong. Tolstoy must have had a hell of a time of it, like the parrot that was plucked by the monkey, while writing it. Of what use in publishing it, his intelligence must have cried out again and again at various points of the story, for surely men will never be born who will marry women who are physically disagreeable to them. It matters not, cried Temperament, for whosoever indulges in the pleasure of female beauty is certain to repeat his pleasure. It may be, as you state, Intelligence replied. But of what use to cry out against what cannot be altered, and of all the ugly things you have ever said, this book is the ugliest. It matters not if it be moral, replied Temperament. Stay your hand, Intelligence implored, before it is too late. This book will provoke comment about your relations with your wife, and you have had thirteen children by her. But Tolstoy's temperament was never stayed by his intelligence. Has he not said that if a man has stripped himself of everything but one blanket he should share it with a leper if the leper wants a blanket? And not having found a leper with whom to share his blanket, he, in imitation of the early hermits, elected to live in a sheeling, but in a sheeling that communicates with folding doors with his wife's apartment. And he will not sleep upon a spring mattress, he must have a feather bed, the one he sleeps upon costs more than any spring mattress. His rooms are quite plain, but to paint and heat them to his liking workmen had to be brought from England. In some ways Tolstoy reminds us of Captain Verney, the discord between conduct and conscience is almost as great. He is loquacious, which Verney was not, and he complains that family ties prevented him from bringing his own life into conformity with his theory of life; and his words on this subject, and indeed on every subject that he writes upon, hardly allow a doubt that Tolstoy's life, in spite of his fortune and his genius, has been one of the unhappiest lives ever lived in this world. Nor is the reason far to seek: everyone is unhappy whose life is not consonant with his ideas. He sought a doctrine of morality in the Gospels; he has not found a sufficient one, for there are earlier and later texts: Be not angry with thy brother without just cause is a later text that appears to Tolstoy far too reasonable to be authentic, and he told Mr Stead, moved by a sudden suspicion, how he went to Moscow and looked up the earliest texts, and that it was just as he suspected. The earliest texts ran: Be not angry with thy brother, which is, of course, much finer than the later texts, but altogether incompatible with life as it is lived in this world. So Mr Stead felt, and for his own instruction and for his readers' he asked Tolstoy if he admitted no exceptions to his doctrine of the non-resistance of evil: should he not use force to prevent a drunken man from kicking a child to death? Tolstoy admitted that this was an exceptional case, and Mr Stead took his leave on these words. But not long after he received a letter from Tolstoy, who had been thinking it over, an exception invalidated the theory, so he was constrained to write to Mr Stead withdrawing his admission that there might be exceptional cases, saying that not even in the case of a drunkard kicking a child to death should evil be resisted.

Tolstoy is not often pathetic, but he is in this letter; he loved truth, but he loved theory better, and had to write an untruth to Mr Stead. Poor Tolstoy! we must not be too hard on him; we must try to appreciate the fact, however strange it may appear to us to be, that there are some amongst us who cannot live without a theory of life, and for the sake of their theory will sacrifice every truth in argument. We must not be too harsh: we must try to appreciate the fact that abstract intellectualism is necessary to some men, and that because their conduct often impinges on a theory they would not do well to put aside the theories, for that it has not stood the test of actual experience. These are our weaker, our Christian brethren. Were you to say to Tolstoy: I am willing to live in obedience to a moral standard, but which moral standard, for there are many, he would answer that there is but one. Read the Gospels and find it. But it may hap that you know the Gospels as well as Tolstoy, and if so you answer: the Gospels teach different moralities, which am I to accept? Tolstoy would answer: I surmise you yourself are forced to make a selection of Christ's teaching, and you will find one in the Gospels that is in agreement with the voice of conscience, and though sure of nothing else, you are sure that your conscience is speaking. But no man's conscience tells him, Tolstoy's interrogator replies, that he should not use force to prevent a drunkard from kicking a child to death.

Tolstoy's ears are so tuned that he can only hear a regular beat, elisions are disagreeable to his ear, and he is prone to remove nature's, thereby spoiling a beautiful story, for the anecdote that inspired him to write *Resurrection* is beautiful. A judge who had tried a Finnish girl for stealing told Tolstoy how one of the jurymen, a man who had never shown any interest in ethical questions before, was so overcome by the thought that he and eleven other sinners were called upon to condemn a thirteenth sinner that he obtained permission to visit the girl in prison. He offered himself in marriage, and the girl accepted his offer gladly, seeing in a rich marriage endless gratification of her desires. But perceiving in time that she did not understand the sacrifice he was making, the man withdrew. Some years afterwards he married a girl of his own class, one who shared his ideas, but it appears that he did not succeed in living happily with her. This is the story that came off Nature's loom: it is rare that

Nature succeeds in weaving a complete story, but this time Nature was an artist, and Tourguéneff, Nature's accomplice, would have recognised the beauty of the story and judged himself to be the humble reporter of it. But Tolstoy, who was always more of a moralist than an artist, felt that this beautiful story must be altered, and in his version of it the conscientious juryman, who had never seen the girl till he saw her in the dock, became her original seducer, for unless the story could be worked into a theory, that if a girl indulges in love outside of marriage she will become a prostitute and a drunkard, it would not be worth telling. Nor was this alteration sufficient, the story had to be distorted still further, for the law against theft would only allow the judge to condemn the girl to a few months' imprisonment, and for the sake of his morals Tolstoy must needs have her sent to Siberia and is thereby constrained to tell us that the girl did not wish to poison the merchant who visited her, but another woman in the house did, and that the girl was in some measure her dupe.

It seems almost unnecessary to say that a man so interested in moral theories soon lost interest in character, and we remember that when he wrote *Pierre*, his most successful adventure into art, he was forty years younger, less hard, narrow, one might say less vindictive. *Resurrection* was written in his old age, and we find in it a portrait of Tolstoy himself, Tolstoy in caricature. The moralist has triumphed altogether over the artist, but the power, the natural gifts that Tolstoy brought into the world, the gift of imaginative vision is in this book as plainly as it is in the other books, but instead of being a help it is a let, a hindrance, making the book a sort of sermon interspersed with realistic descriptions thrown in, one might say scattered broadcast, without order or foresight. Not once but twice our attention is called to the thick sweating neck of an inn servant, a woman who never appears in the story again, nor does the inn in which she serves appear again, and when the conscientious juryman visits his properties he meets a woman carrying a fowl—a fowl that is going to be cooked for the landlord's dinner that night, but the fact that the fowl was within an hour of being converted into food did not prevent Tolstoy from describing it minutely, even to its legs, which we are told were covered with black feathers of a certain length. Yet in his book entitled *What is Art?* he writes: In literary art this method [the realistic method] consists in describing in minutest details, the external appearance, the faces, the clothes, the gestures, the tones, and the habitations of the characters represented, with all the occurrences met with in life. For instance, in novels, in stories, when one of the characters speaks we are told in what voice he spoke, and what he was doing at the time. And the things said are not given so that they should have as much sense as possible, but as they are in life, disconnectedly, and with interruptions and omissions.

When Tolstoy wrote this passage of exordium he must have forgotten the sweating neck of the inn servant, the feathered legs of the fowl and the twelve jurymen whose appearances are described in such detail that we have forgotten the first before we have read about the third. We should be glad to forget Tolstoy's inconsistencies and enjoy the very amusing description of the rehearsal with which the book begins. Tolstoy, had he been less aggressive in his relation of an opera—Cherubino's *Water Carrier* —an opera from which he must have gotten pleasure at some earlier period of his life, perhaps that is why he is so bitter, insisting that because everyone does not like operas, the money spent on operas had better be spent in a more useful way—this argument would have more force. But would it? For is it not impossible to find several to agree regarding a project on which money may be spent usefully? And passing from the amusing to the serious part of the book, to what Tolstoy would call the useful, and what we call the wasteful, we find that Tolstoy has read everything that the professors of æsthetics have written on the subject, and opinions are given from German, English, French and Italian writers, but none of them can supply a satisfactory definition of what is art, and Tolstoy thereby concludes that because beauty eludes definition it does not exist. But morality is equally hard to define, yet—we will not labour the point. Tolstoy quotes Baumgarten, who held the belief that the Greek ideal beauty is the highest that men have ever discovered. But Tolstoy believes in progress, and it seems to him absurd to think that the very best that can be done by the art of nations after nineteen hundred years of Christian teaching is to choose, as the ideal of their life, an ideal that was held by an unmoral, semi-savage slave-owning people who lived two thousand years ago, who modelled the human body extremely well, and who erected buildings pleasing to look at. That is how Tolstoy views the race that has occupied the thoughts of men more than any other, preferring by far a tribe of verminous Bedouins who, after wandering for some years in the neighbourhood of Mount Sinai, settled in Palestine. He prefers Hebrew literature to Greek, for although the Bible contained many exhortations to murder, it was not written to give pleasure. And he speaks of these two literatures because they are the oldest and more read to-day than any other, and for that every man must cast his lot with the Greeks or the Hebrews. Tolstoy prefers the Psalms to Æschylus, but in placing Hebrew literature above Greek he overlooks the fact that Greek literature has survived its mythologies; Prometheus has outlived his persecutor Zeus, and Tolstoy does not trouble to answer the question that comes to everybody's mind to ask: will the Psalms outlive Jehovah? The idea he desires to press forward is that art is worthless unless inspired by religious ideas. Better still, by a moral idea. We pause to think: moral ideas are always changing, and what is wrong in one age is right in another; whereas beauty may be said to be eternal. We do not plead that the standard of beauty knows no modifications, but it is surely certain that the verses of Homer and the sculpture of Phidias have outlived many moralities.

Tolstoy does not like modern French art, but he cannot condemn art as bad art merely because it is incomprehensible to him unless he declares all art to be bad, which he is unwilling to do. So we get back to our friends the peasants. To which peasant, we ask—Russian, English or French? Is he or she fifteen or sixty? Is he or she the most intelligent in the village? Or is he or she the least intelligent? are the questions we put to Tolstoy, and his answer is: the peasant representing the average intelligence of the village. Why should the lowest intelligence be excluded? If the peasant is the best judge of what is art, why should not the best art be produced by peasants? This question Tolstoy dares to face, and this is how he faces it. He tells how he once assisted at a performance of the play of *Hamlet*. The part was played by one of the greatest actors of the world, but Tolstoy experienced all the time—I give his words—that particular suffering which is caused by false imitations of works of art. And to enable us to follow the drift of his mind he describes the performance of a play given by the Voguls, a savage tribe, in which a bird warns the reindeer of their danger, and this play inspired in Tolstoy feelings which all true art inspires.

A big Vogul and a little one, both dressed in reindeer skins, represent a reindeer doe and its young. A third Vogul with a bow represents a huntsman on snow-shoes, and a fourth imitates with his voice a bird that warns the reindeer of their danger. The play is that the huntsman follows the track that the doe with its young has travelled. The deer run off the scene and again reappear. (Such performances take place in a small tent-house.) The huntsman gains more and more on the pursued. The little deer is tired, and presses against its mother. The doe stops to draw breath. The hunter comes up with them and draws his bow. But just then the bird sounds its note, warning the deer of their danger. They escape. Again there is a chase, and again the hunter gains on them, catches them, and lets fly his arrow. The arrow strikes the young deer. Unable to run, the little one presses against its mother. The mother licks its wound. The hunter draws another arrow. The audience, as the eye-witness describes, are paralysed with suspense; deep groans and even weeping is heard among them. And from mere description I felt that this was a true work of art.

What I am saying will be considered irrational paradox, at which one can only be amazed.

But the question comes of the value of this exhibition of Tolstoy's hard, isolated, tenacious apprehensions. It seems to me that Nature has answered this question by devising a death for Tolstoy that reads so like an admonition that we cannot but suspect the eternal wisdom of a certain watchfulness over human life. Of the nature of this watchfulness we know nothing. We interrogate Nature and get no answer: like a parrot Nature sits, a wrinkled drooping eyelid falling over a round, sleepy eye, but as soon as we forget her, Nature, like the parrot, speaks words so appropriate to the occasion that we find it hard to reject the belief that Polly is not unaware that her words carry a meaning. Can we doubt that St Helena, with Napoleon gazing blankly at the ocean, carries a meaning, and is not the end that Nature devised for Tolstoy as significant, a flight from his wife and home in his eighty-second year, and his death in the waiting-room of a wayside station in the early hours of a March morning?

CHAPTER 8.

IN the beginning of the last century a musician, Félicien David, came to Algeria with some painters in search of art (in those days local colour was looked upon as art), and hearing the Arabs singing round their camp fires rhythms that seemed to him unknown in Western Europe, he introduced many of them into his symphony, *Le Désert*, and with such good result that when his symphony was performed in Paris Berlioz wrote an article entitled A New Beethoven. For some days, some weeks, or some months, David and his symphony were the subject of discussion in inartistic circles, but one evening Auber, who had not ventured an opinion till then, said, on being pressed to give one: I will wait till David gets off his camel; and in the nineties, for no better reason than Beethoven's name was spoken in connection with David, Shakespeare's was evoked when Mr Kipling came to England with *Plain Tales from the Hills*. For local colour was still looked upon as art, and Mr Kipling's stories were filled even fuller with hookahs and elephants, parakeets and crocodiles, than *Le Désert* with Arab rhythms.

Life does but repeat itself, but there is always a shade of difference in every repetition, so it was not a fellow-writer but the editor of *Lippincott's Magazine* who asked Mr Kipling to get off his camel. His proposal to Mr Kipling was for a story in which there should not be many camels, and Mr Kipling must have tried his best to comply with the editor's conditions, for there are a few in the beginning of *The Light that Failed*, none afterwards—not as the story was written for *Lippincott's*, but it was re-written, and the second version ends amid a herd of camels. The hero is a special artist who has done some sketches in the East; his sketches, we feel sure, were wash drawings, and they attracted so much attention that a dealer tried to buy the lot, but the special artist said: I know a trick worth two of that, and forthright laid plans for making as much money as possible. The analogy between the special artist and Mr Kipling is plain indeed, and it led many subtle critics to suspect that Mr Kipling would not show himself to be what is known as a creative artist in the subsequent stages of his career—by creative artist is meant one who is able through sympathy to imagine men and women living in ideas and emotions alien to him; and if this be a true definition of a creative artist, Mr Kipling was certainly not one in *The Light that Failed*. He knew what the journalist was through himself, for there is a good deal of the journalist in Mr Kipling, and he had observed journalists, but not being willing that his hero, Dick Helder, should remain a pure and unmitigated journalist, he does the very thing that a journalist would do in the circumstances, he sets him painting *Melancholia*, Albert Dürer's subject, thereby lowering his hero to the condition of a melancholy fool and exposing his own poverty of invention. Let this, however, be said in defence of Mr Kipling the artist, *The Light that Failed* seems to have revealed to him his limitations; we are not aware of any other attempt of Mr Kipling in imaginative representation of men and women, and the knowledge of one limitation is the sure sign of the artist. Mr Kipling is an artist in a measure; his power over words makes him one, and we can but regret that we do not find among his many gifts the supreme gift.

The phrase I have attributed to Dick Helder, I know a trick worth two of that, does not appear in the story entitled *The Light that Failed*, but the personality of this special artist, except when he tries to paint a picture of Melancholia is racy of I know a trick worth two of that. The words are in a way an abridgment, a compendium of Dick Helder's attitude towards life; he browses like a horse in tether within the circle of I know a trick worth two of that. I know a trick worth two of that is the keynote of Mr Kipling's mind. It is the key in which he always writes; he indulges in some modulations, but the key of I know a trick worth two of that is never quite out of his ear, and if one were so minded, one could trace it through all his prose and a good many poems. Nearly the whole of *Kim* is written in this key; now and then he modulates into the world and its shows, the Great Wheel, etc., but one knows that the terrible key—I know a trick worth two of that—is never far off. And he delights in Kim, just as he delighted in Dick, and his admiration is so spontaneous that it is impossible to read *Kim* without saying to oneself: Kim is Mr Kipling. Kim is never taken in, and not to be taken in is in Mr Kipling's eyes a sort of north star whereby one steers the bark of life. Kim is a spy, but spying is called the Great Game, and nothing matters so long as you are not taken in, and Mr Kipling's beast-kind is the same as his mankind; the animals in the Jungle Books that we are to admire are those that know a trick worth two of that. He does not venture among godkind, but if he did, his gods too would know a trick worth two of that.

Now it is a moot question if an author's mind extends beyond the characters he creates. Did not Baudelaire say that in Balzac even the porters had genius? Among Mr Kipling's works there is a book called *The Gadsbys*, and the theme is that if a man wants to get on in the army he should not get married. This will seem, to those who admire the book, an unfair description of it; but we must not be deceived by the external form—we must, if we would appreciate a writer, take into account his attitude towards life, we must discover if his version is mean or noble, spiritual or material, narrow or wide; for all things are in the eye that sees, the ear that hears, the brain that remembers, the earliest and latest philosophy that is; and in the eighties none knew what world Mr Kipling was about to reveal; but his world is before us now, and noble and beautiful are not the adjectives that anyone would choose wherewith to designate the world of Kipling. Rough, harsh, coarse-grained, come into our minds; Mr Kipling's world is a barracks full of oaths and clatter of sabres; but his language is so copious, rich and sonorous that one is tempted to say that none since the Elizabethans has written so copiously. Others have written more beautifully, but no one that I can call to mind at this moment has written so copiously. Shelley and Wordsworth, Landor and Pater, wrote with part of the language; but who else, except Whitman, has written with the whole language since the Elizabethans? The flannelled fool at the wicket, the muddied oaf of the goal, is wonderful language. He writes with the eye that appreciates all that the eye can see, but of the heart he knows nothing, for the heart cannot be observed; his characters are therefore external, and they are stationary. At first we are taken by Kim, for he is well seen, well observed, well copied; the Lama too we can see as if he were before us—an old man in a long habit has his rosary hanging from the girdle, and we hear his continuous mumbling; but before many pages we begin to perceive that Kim and the Lama are fixed, and we have not read fifty pages before the conviction dawns that those two will be the same at the end of the book as they were in the beginning.

The Lama has come from Tibet in search of a sacred river, and at the outset of his journey he meets a street arab, precocious and vile in his every instinct, and these two make common cause, for they are the pegs whereon Mr Kipling intends to hang his descriptions of India. If they are no more than blunt pegs I would like them better, but they are carved a little, a little here and there; but let the carving pass; something must be granted to every writer. Mr Kipling's object is to describe India, and we shall see how he does this; he shall be measured by our measure, and a fair one it will be judged, for it is applicable though the writer be describing a sunset or an old woman peeling onions, whether he is putting words into the mouth of a tramp or of a philosopher. How much of the precious wine of life do we taste, and in what intensity do we taste it, while reading is our standard measure, whether the art under consideration be literature or painting, whether the literature be prose or poetry; and having stated our measure of criticism, we will proceed with the measurement of Mr Kipling:

They entered the fort-like railway station, black in the end of night; the electrics sizzling over the goods-yard, where they handle the heavy Northern grain-traffic.

How strong the rhythm, lacking perhaps in subtlety, like the tramp of policemen, but a splendid rhythm. And it is Mr Kipling's own rhythm; he borrows from no man, and it is always a pleasure to read or hear unborrowed literature or music.

A little farther on we find ourselves in the middle of a spacious paragraph, the sentences moving to the same sonorous march measure:

Then it came out in those worldly days he had been a master-hand at casting horoscopes and nativities, and the family priest led him on to describe his methods, each giving the planets names that the other could not understand, and pointing upwards as the big stars sailed across the dark. The children of the house tugged unrebuked at his rosary; and he clean forgot the Rule which forbids looking at women as he talked of enduring snows, landslips, blocked passages, the remote cliffs where men find sapphires and turquoise, and that wonderful upland road that leads at last into great China itself.

And how finely it ends, that long sentence stretching itself out like: the upland road that leads at last into great China itself!

In saying these things we are praising Mr Kipling's technical excellence, but technical excellence is of no value for us except as a means through which life is revealed.

A few pages farther on we come upon a description of evening; and evening is one of the eternal subjects—men were sensible to the charm and beauty and the tenderness of evening ten thousand years ago, and ten thousand years hence they will be moved in the same way:

> By this time the sun was driving broad golden spokes through the lower branches of the mango-trees; the parakeets and doves were coming home in their hundreds; the chattering grey-backed Seven Sisters, talking over the day's adventures, walked back and forth in twos and threes almost under the feet of the travellers; the shufflings and scufflings in the branches showed that the bats were ready to go out on the night picket. Swiftly the light gathered itself together, painted for an instant the faces and the cartwheels and bullocks' horns as red as blood. Then the night fell, changing the touch of the air, drawing a low, even haze like a gossamer veil of blue across the face of the country, and bringing out, keen and distinct, the smell of wood-smoke and cattle and the good scent of wheaten cakes cooked on ashes. The evening patrol hurried out of the police-station with important coughings and reiterated orders; and a live charcoal ball in the cup of a wayside carter's hookah glowed red while Kim's eyes mechanically watched the last flicker of the sun on the brass tweezers.

No one will deny the perfection of the writing, of the strong masculine rhythm of every sentence, and of the accuracy of every observation. But it seems to us that Mr Kipling has seen much more than he has felt; and we prefer feeling to seeing; and when we come to analyse the lines we find a touch of local colour not only in every sentence, but in each part between each semicolon: The sun was driving golden spokes through the branches of the *mango* trees, the *parakeets*, the doves, the chattering grey-backed Seven Sisters, the bats ready to go out on the *night picket*, the *light painting* the faces and the cartwheels and the *bullocks' horns*. At last a sentence that does not carry any local colour: then the night fell, changing the touch of the air, drawing a low even haze like a gossamer veil of blue across the face of the country, but after the comma local colour begins again, bringing out, keen and distinct, the smell of *wood-smoke* and *cattle*, and the *cakes*, etc. Then there is the evening patrol and the live *charcoal ball*, and then Kim's eyes watching the flicker of the sun on the *brass tweezers*.

It would be difficult to find a passage in literature of the same length so profusely touched with local colour. Was it not a shame to observe that slender wistful hour so closely? Mr Kipling seems to have followed it about like a detective employed in a divorce case—like Kim himself, who is a political spy. We prefer an evening by Pierre Loti; he experiences a sensation, and his words transmit the sensation, and remind us of many things that we have experienced at sunsetting. Loti's touch is perhaps a little superficial, a little facile, the feeling is perhaps genteel, even trite, but with all there is more wistfulness in Loti than in Kipling, and an evening that is not wistful is not evening:

But evening comes, evening with its magic, and we relinquish ourselves to the charm once more.

About our brave little encampment, about the rough horizon where all danger seems at present asleep, the twilight sky kindles an incomparable rose border, orange, then green; and then, rising by degrees to the zenith, it softens and quenches. It is the indecisive and lovely hour, when amid limpidities which are neither day nor night our odorous fires begin to burn clearly, sending up their white smoke to the first stars; our camels, relieved of their burdens and their high saddles, sweep by the thin bushes, browsing on perfumed branches, like great fantastic sheep, of slow inoffensive demeanour. It is the hour when our Bedouins sit in a circle to tell stories and sing; the hour of rest, and the hour of dream, the delicious hour of nomadic life.

The Bedouins and camels tell us that the evening Loti is describing is an Eastern evening, but even these two touches of local colour, which were unavoidable, add nothing to the beauty of the passage: suppress them, turn the Bedouins into gipsies and the camels into horses, and it would be impossible to say whether the evening described had happened in England or Japan. Loti's intention was to describe something that is eternal in the heart of man, something that he has known always, that he knew ten thousand years before Nineveh and that he will know ten thousand years hence. Mr Kipling's intention is more ethnological than poetic. We learn from it that the parakeets and doves come home to the woods in the evening, we learn that the sun turns the faces and the bullocks' horns red as blood, and a variety of other things. From Loti's description we have learned nothing, but we have been moved, as we are moved when we look at a portrait by Rembrandt. Not for a moment must it be thought that I compare Loti with Rembrandt. Loti is a painter in water colours, his sentences flow fragile and transparent like flower blooms; but Rembrandt's intention and Loti's intention is the same—the intention is to interest us in things that always have been and always will be. But I envy Mr Kipling his copious and sonorous vocabulary, especially his neologisms; he writes with the whole language, with the language of the Bible, and with the language of the streets. He can do this, for he possesses the inkpot which turns the vilest tin idiom into gold. Last night, his description of the hills was for me a cup of mixed admiration and misery, and I reaffirm my belief that no one tainted with journalism has written in a language more like the English language, and we take pleasure in noting that, unlike every other journalist, he refrains from French words:

> They crossed a snowy pass in cold moonlight, when the Lama, mildly chaffing Kim, went through up to his knees, like a Bactrian camel—the snow-bred, shag-haired sort that come into the Kashmir Serai. They dipped across beds of light snow and snow-powdered shale, where they took refuge from a gale in a camp of Tibetans hurrying down tiny sheep, each laden with a bag of borax. They came out upon grassy shoulders still snow-speckled, and through forest, to grass anew. For all their marchings, Kedarnath and Badrinath were not impressed; and it was only after days of travel that Kim, uplifted upon some insignificant ten-thousand-foot hummock, could see that a shoulder-knot or horn of the great lords had—ever so slightly—changed outline.
>
> At last they entered a world within a world—a valley of leagues where the high hills were fashioned of the mere rubble and refuse from off the knees of the mountain. Here one day's march carried them no farther, it seemed, than a dreamer's clogged pace bears him in a nightmare. They skirted a shoulder painfully for hours, and, behold, it was but an outlying boss in an outlying buttress of the main pile! A rounded meadow revealed itself, when they had reached it, for a vast tableland

running far into the valley. Three days later, it was a dim fold in the earth to southward.

Surely the Gods live here, said Kim, beaten down by the silence and the appalling sweep and dispersal of the cloud-shadows after rain. This is no place for men!

Long and long ago, said the Lama, as to himself, it was asked of the Lord whether the world were everlasting. To this the Excellent One returned no answer. . . . When I was in Ceylon, a wise seeker confirmed that from the gospel which is written in Pali. Certainly since we know the way to Freedom, the question were unprofitable, but —look, and know illusion, *chela*! These are the true hills! They are like my hills by Suchzen. Never were such hills!

Above them, still enormously above them, earth towered away towards the snow-line, where from east to west, across hundreds of miles, ruled as with a ruler, the last of the bold birches stopped. Above that, in scarps and block upheaved, the rocks strove to fight their heads above the white smother. Above these again, changeless since the world's beginning, but changing to every mood of sun and cloud, lay out the eternal snow. They could see blots and blurs on its face, where storm and wandering *mullie-ma* got up to dance. Below them, as they stood, the forest slid away in a sheet of blue-green, for mile upon mile; below the forest was a village in its sprinkle of terraced fields and steep grazing-grounds; below the village they knew, though a thunderstorm growled and worried there for a moment, a pitch of twelve or fifteen hundred feet gave to the moist valley where the streams gather that are the mothers of young Sutluj.

A miserable midnight is often succeeded by a sunny morning, and it was a relief to awake forgetful of what I had read overnight. Envy! Of course! We're envious because we admire; the lay reader neither admires nor envies—art is for the artists. And I was glad to awake forgetful of Mr Kipling, thinking of Pierre Loti, of a book I had not seen for months. On looking into *Kim* again I found pages of dialogue, magnificently wrought, hard and breathless; a hardware shop with iron tulips hanging from the rafters and brass forget-me-nots on the counter. Loti is never hard. His attitude towards life is that of a child, of a blond ringleted child with bright blue eyes and hands full of flower blooms, and a sensibility like that of a perverse child impelled to caresses. The description I remembered was a description of a wet evening on Mount Sinai, a few simple lines, simple as a tune played on a shepherd's pipe, not the pipe of a real shepherd, but on a silver flute. Listen to Loti's sweet piping and forget the regimental band, whose last echoes are dying in the twilight:

> Marching all the morning through interminable valleys that are alike, walled with red granite, ascending by slight inclines towards the great Sinai where we shall be to-morrow. They grow larger, the valleys, and the mountains rise higher; everything becomes grander amid changing and sombre clouds; over yonder, in front of us, through gigantic and opening bays of stone, we begin to see still higher peaks with white snows shining against the darkness of the sky. An icy wind arises, blowing towards us from the buttresses of Sinai; it drowns us in a smiting rain of melting snow and hail; our camels scream and tremble with cold; our light clothes of white wool, our thin Arab slippers, everything is soon saturated with flowing water; and ourselves are trembling, our teeth clenched, our hands suffering and inert, mortally benumbed.

Soon after, the caravan arrives at Sinai, and several days are spent in a monastery fifteen hundred years old, whose cedar doors are a thousand years. Loti mentions that the monks have finished saying their prayers, but their prayers have no concern for him; he is not sufficiently interested in them to meditate upon their wisdom or their folly in living their lives amid the rocks of Sinai; he is more interested in the age of the doors, and of the chests, and of the tapestries, and the many old things they show him, and he bids the monks good-bye, somewhat amused by the fact that this good-bye is for eternity. It was part of Loti's genius to look upon the individual as passing, hardly worthy of notice; and this is why Zola said to me, the evening that the news came in that the Academy had elected Loti, that there was no humanity in Loti. I did not understand what Zola meant at the time, for I had not read Loti; now I understand how Zola was deceived. Zola looked upon habits and customs as humanity, and there are no habits and customs in Loti. What is admirable in Loti, what gives him his originality, is his indifference to the individual. He leads us away from our individual troubles, and interests us in the vast mysterious sky, and the rocks; man has travelled the desert with his camels for ever and ever, that is to say since Abraham——

Behind us the scarps of granite have become black screens, wrought and strangely carven against a starry sky—and placed there like the wild seal of Islam, the thin crescent of an Oriental moon, its two horns in the air.

Wandering, for ever wandering through silvery mornings, dazzling afternoons, and rose-coloured evenings, then resting under the moon, the burden of centuries fallen from our shoulders, universal education, bimetallism, free trade, electric light, and wood paving, all our ideas fallen, and we nomads again, wandering, for ever wandering.

Next day we enter an oasis, a little circle of life created by a spring amid the rocks, and rest there; and we resume our journey, wandering, for ever wandering under an immense sky, and Loti noticing every change in it, pink and mauve and grey, delicate harmonies played on lute and lyre, with a flute singing pale turquoise blue. Some brass instruments are added to the orchestra; the bassoon tells of the great blue gulf above, and the trombone of the great blue gulf on the right, a great gulf of Prussian blue describing a curve—the Sea of Akabah. The sheikh rides up to Loti and asks him if he will ride his dromedary, which he says is swifter than the one Loti is riding, and they trot on side by side. A bird follows, flying in the shadow of the dromedary, and at night-time it seeks shelter in Loti's tent. These are the events. Someone shoots a nightjar; it was beautiful when it was flying, but an uninteresting lump of feathers when it was dead; and the female comes crying round the camp seeking its lost mate. And we are delighted when the caravan enters Palestine. For there is a change in the air; it is no longer the hard, dry air that passes unbreathed over a world without life of stones and sand. And with little greedy grunts of satisfaction the camels swing their long necks from side to side, snatching ears of corn. I shall always remember the last salutes when the Arabs leave Loti, returning to the desert where they were born, and where they like to live. Soft as the sound of a flute in the distance the words go by. One writer blows his pipe on the hill-side, the other blares like a military band; all brass and reed instruments are included in this band. Mr Kipling's prose goes to a marching rhythm, the trumpet's blare and the fife's shriek; there is the bass clarionet and the great tuba that emits a sound like the earth quaking fathoms deep, or the cook shovelling coal in the coal-cellar. The band is playing variations; but variations on what theme? The theme will appear presently. . . . Listen! There is the theme, the shoddy tune of the average man: I know a trick worth two of that.

CHAPTER 9.

IT is related in a book entitled *Confessions of a Young Man* that I returned home from France a little forgetful of England and her literature, a little estranged, and that while writing a novel in a Western country it came upon me to doubt if beautiful prose could be written in English; a sufficiently alarming discovery for me, if it were one, for I had abandoned my one-time project of learning French; and to this confession I might have added that, possessed of a great fear lest I should miss in the English language an instrument that would secure to me the fulfilment of my dreams, I ransacked my grandfather's library for evidence that the English language was still a literary potentiality; but not happening upon Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, which might have reassured me, I sent to London for a new work by Walter Pater which was then being announced (I had heard of Pater as a writer of beautiful books), and waited, clinging to the hope that I had heard truly, till Marius rescued me from my dejection.

The first paragraph of the newly arrived book predicted something that France had not revealed to me, and when that wonderful second chapter entitled White Nights was reached I sat thinking, a little overcome, reproaching myself for not having thought of the unaffected joys of the heart, the colour of the great air about the yellowing marbles of the Roman Villa, or that by helping one's mother with her white and purple wools, and caring for her musical instruments it was possible to win from the handling of such things an urbane and feminine refinement; or that by avoiding all that leads into desire and is evidently ugly, we can make sure of a temporal life sufficiently stable and sufficient for the soul. No, I had not thought of all that.

A very trivial appreciation of *Marius the Epicurean* this will seem to Pater's twentieth-century readers: for few readers have the historical sense, and the truth will be overlooked that a young man without education, except what he picked up in a French café, could apprehend only the beauty of a great work of art in some external aspects. But if my appreciations were superficial, they were intense, and I cannot tell now how it was that I did not take the train to Dublin and the boat to England and seek the author out wherever he had hidden himself, and thank him, my two hands extended, for the great benefit his book had been to me. It had lifted a great mood of dejection from me, and I went about the fields saying to myself: the English language is still alive, Pater has raised it from the dead. And if I did not write to tell him of the great benefit he had conferred upon art, it was for shame of my poor English, fear that some Gallicism or blunder would betray me to the master as one that was not worthy of apostleship. It must have been thus, for I have recollections that the moment I drew a sheet of paper towards me to write about this book the pen stopped and my thoughts began to stray through the story Pater related of young Marius's ideas and sensations, a modern story, inasmuch as it was a human one. Our human nature does not change in essentials; and at every page this story seemed to have been written for me, and at moments it seemed as if Pater had divined not only my existence but even the very circumstance of my life, for Marius lived in an old family mansion, one which he was soon to leave to go to Rome, drawn thither by literature—a literary career having become a necessity through the extravagance of an ancestor; and my house, a Georgian mansion, standing on a hill-top, amid branching woods, was also neglected; like Marius's house it had fallen into the lag end of its fortunes; and while wandering round the ruined stables in which had stood a hundred horses, and through the abandoned gardens on whose high wall a peacock, the last of a long race, screamed for a mate, I remembered that my own life was to live with my widowed mother, leaving her every spring for London just before the beech woods begin to swell into pink buds.

And it was in the year that I went to Moore Hall to write *Muslin* that I read *Marius the Epicurean.* Yes, it must have been in 1885, so long did the springtime seem to me coming, and I weary of waiting for it, my thoughts away in London where men and women were reading and talking about Marius. Even the day rises up in my memory when I walked with mother on the windy lawn facing the grey lake, remarking to her that the spring was later that year than I had ever known it before. You promised to stay with me, George, till the leaves came, and you know they do not come until May. My thoughts are set, mother, on Kensington, on Earl's Terrace, whither the Robinsons have gone from Gower Street to live, for it will be there I shall hear an interesting appreciation of *Marius the Epicurean.* Only in Earl's Terrace can I learn how the book has been received in London. What matter to you, George, how the book has been received in London, since you like it? You're always asking people for their opinions, but I don't think you ever take them. We do not borrow people's opinions, we assimilate them, I answered, and fell to thinking that my curiosity to hear what people were saying about *Marius* was not caused by lack of confidence in my judgment; my instinct, for it was one, would not allow me to think else than that Pater had added an immortal prose masterpiece to the English language; though all the world said nay I should answer: pooh. My mind was itching to cry out in the Robinsons' drawing-room: Pater has added a prose work to English literature, a thing that English literature stands in need of. I shall affirm this, I said to myself, with Pauline accent, and Mary Robinson will answer something unexpected, picturesque, altogether out of the common. But nothing falls out exactly as we expect it, and two months later, in May, Mary seemed to me almost aloof, getting into corners as if unwilling to enter into serious conversation. Her sister Mabel, on whose judgment I reposed much trust, distressed me with remarks regarding what she termed Pater's mannerisms, saying they were too marked for a great work of art, and you're putting it forward as one of the greatest ever written. I'm afraid that what you regard as mannerisms I regard as the great craft necessary for the conveyance of the subject. Without what you term the blandness, you would have had the subject without texture, and a book without texture——

New visitors were announced, and the conversation about Pater had to cease, but as soon as the odds and oddments left (odds and oddments collected even at the Robinsons') Mary led the conversation back whence it had started, and Mabel compared Pater to Renan, a comparison that did not seem to annoy her sister as it should have done, Mary's thoughts being at that time away in France. And I could make no sufficient answer, not having read Renan; the best I could do was to interpose that a French writer comes to us in the investiture of a language that we only half understand. If the conversation occurred to-day I should answer: a writer whom I admire for his lucidity and power of exposition, whilst disliking the ecclesiastical sleekness with which he raises Jesus out of godhead, a stupid third-century invention, no more than that. And once more the conversation slipped away from Pater. Vernon Lee's book, *Euphorion*, had just been published, and Mary was anxious to speak about it, which was tiresome. But to be just, Vernon Lee did not try to prolong the conversation; like myself, she was more interested in Marius than in anything, and it was she who led the conversation back to him, and was speaking with extraordinary eloquence regarding his use of words, when we were again interrupted. This time the visitor was Henry James.

A flutter of feminine attention began at once about the important American, and while he talked in his pompous but not unfriendly manner, addressing his conversation by turns to Mary and Mabel Robinson, a little careless, I thought, of the attentions of Vernon Lee and her admirations of his style, I was left to my meditations, and these began in a recollection of Henry James's size, which seemed to have enlarged since I last saw him—a man of great bulk and such remoteness that one did not associate him with *The Portrait of a Lady*. He did not carry my thoughts towards a man who had known women at first hand and intimately, but one who had watched them with literary rather than personal interest. And these thoughts drew my eyes to the round head, already going bald, to the small dark eyes closely set, and to the great expanse of closely shaven face. His legs were short, and his hands and feet large; and he sat portentously in his chair, speaking with some hesitation and great care, anxious that every sentence, or if not all, at least every third or fourth, should send forth a beam of humour. I had met him at the Robinsons' some two years before, and was, of course, much impressed, for he was the first English writer I knew whom I could look upon as an artist. We had had some conversation at the Robinsons', and it is my belief that I left their house with him, or it may have been my good fortune to have overtaken him on his way to the Kensington railway station. Be this as it may, we travelled some distance together, and he told me to look out for an article by him on the art of fiction in *Longman's Magazine.* It will appear, he said, next month, and might be considered in some respects to be a partial answer to Robert Louis Stevenson and to Andrew Lang, who had been contributing to this magazine, articles on the art of fiction. I listened to him, hoping for an opportunity to relate the subject of *A Modern Lover*, which I was then writing; the chance came, and my narrative was successful; a change of expression that I recognised as one of envy passed over the vast face, a change of expression that seemed to admit at least that he thought the subject would have suited him very well. It was after the publication of this book that I retired to Moore Hall to begin *A Mummer's Wife*, and when that book was published a controversy began about its morality in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, and to secure Henry James's advocacy, I sent him the article I had contributed on the subject and the book. A few weeks later a long letter came from him, a letter that would have embellished these pages if I possessed it, but only a few stray memories of it remain. He said, and he said truly, that the book seemed to him to have been thought in French and inadequately translated; and I remember too that he expressed an opinion regarding its length, which he recognised as disproportionate to the matter related, a pronouncement which sent my thoughts flying back to the time long ago when Henry James's name first broke upon my ears in the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, to the lady who lent me *Daisy Miller*, *Four Meetings*, *Madame de Mauve*, *A Passionate Pilgrim*, and a host of other stories, *Roderick Hudson* among them, all of which, with a story entitled *The Madonna of the Future*, revealed to me a refined and accomplished writer, possessed of a style that he must have brought into the world with him, for it had already borne a number of volumes. We should seek English literature vainly for a more beautiful description of Raphael's Madonna, than his *Virgin of the Chair*; and even at that time I foresaw in him a writer who could apply Gautier's celebrated phrase to himself: To me the visible world is visible. He might have added: to me the invisible world is even more invisible than it was to Gautier. The addition might not be in keeping with his conception of himself, I said, and turned to his letter again. It contained hints of psychological ambitions that interested me, but consideration of these was interrupted by a great curiosity to learn why *The Portrait of a Lady* was not too long, though it contained more text than *A Mummer's Wife*, and much less subject matter, and while gazing between the islands across the grey lake I fell to thinking what sort of answer he would make to the letter that had gone to the post.

His difficult writing appeared again in a few days, and it began with an admission that *The Portrait of a Lady* was much too long. A delightful admission truly, but one that he spoilt by a qualification, for he said that the woman in *The Portrait of a Lady* represented a higher intellectual plane than Kate Ede, and proceeded to draw from the alleged fact the conclusion that she lived an intenser life than the workwoman. He said, too, that he gathered from my book that Kate Ede's intelligence was not part of the subject as I conceived it, which, of course, was true, her emotions and instincts having seemed to me enough. And so the question came how a clever man could deceive himself so thoroughly. For what are his lady and the group of people that surround her, I said, but idle, passionless Americans wandering over Europe in search of amusement, not even amusement, distraction. A husband who collects cameos; an American friend whose occupation is to keep his hands in his pockets, and a lady who vainly struggles with perjured washerwomen —perjured washerwomen! How a man's adjective betrays his ambitions. And to this group comes a lover who, after a long siege, kisses the lady; the kiss is one of the worst in literature, proclaiming the fact that Henry James knows very little about kissing, and that it does not interest him. The lady breaks away; and next day the lover calls on her, but he only meets her friend, and is told that she has gone to Rome. Was there ever in this world so bloodless and ineffectual a conclusion? Yet, I said, he writes to me about psychology, mistaking, I could not help thinking, trivial comments about men and women, only faintly imagined, for psychology. That which is firmly and clearly imagined needs no psychology. Hamlet and Don Quixote are psychologies, and so is Dick Lennox, though a long way off. The first business of the writer is to find a human instinct; it is as necessary to him as a fox is to the fox-hunter; and Henry James does not fulfil the first conditions of the chase; as well bring out a pack of foxhounds to hunt a rat; and I remembered the shadowy souls one meets in his books walking up and down terraces, and their needless struggles whether they should offer each other cigarettes or refrain. He mistakes detail for psychology, I continued, and going to my little store of books and picking out *The Madonna of the Future*, I read the tale again, letting the volume drop on my knees so that I might recall the original story, Balzac's, a story of a great artist who had painted many beautiful pictures, and who closed his studio to all his friends, saying he was engaged upon a masterpiece. The years went by, leaving the masterpiece unfinished; for to finish it a certain model had to be found, and he agreed to let a fellow-craftsmen see the masterpiece if Pourbus brought his mistress with him, she being the model the great artist had sought vainly throughout Europe and, I think, Asia. Pourbus and the model pass through rooms hung with beautiful pictures that have lost all interest for the great artist, the picture that interests him is one that has been stippled and glazed and repainted, and begun again so often that of the original picture only one beautifully painted foot remains. In Henry James the artist wastes his life looking at an empty canvas, hardly enough to justify rewriting Balzac, I said, and sat asking myself how it was he overlooked the variation that might have justified the retelling of the story, returning to my first idea that Henry James lacked the psychological sense altogether, at least as I understood it, till forgetful of the presence of Mary and Mabel Robinson, and of Vernon Lee, I sought justification for the heresy in a memory of his description of Raphael's Madonna, one to which Gautier would have taken off his hat. It was natural to recall his descriptions of the English landscape in *The Passionate Pilgrim*, and the complete breakdown that follows when the psychological situation enters in the person of the owner of the house and property—an early story, it is true, but a man shows what he is going to do the moment he puts pen to paper, or brush to canvas. Manet's words to me, and he was incontestably a man of genius.

As I recalled the thoughts that Henry James's letter had raised in my mind the word Pater transported me from Moore Hall back into the Kensington drawing-room. Vernon Lee was now speaking about Pater's infallible use of words, and I said to myself: Henry James will find fault with Marius for reasons analogous to those he gave for preferring the lady whose portrait he painted to Kate Ede. He will say that Marius does not represent life as intensely as his friend Flavius, and that Flavius, therefore, should have been the hero of the story. But he had not been speaking for long before I began to recognise an extraordinarily able critic. A man, I murmured, too analytic for creation, finds his job in criticism; and prone though I was then, as now, to resent any fault-finding in Marius, I could not but yield to his challenge, that although the whole of the first volume is given over to praise of Pagan civilisation, a large part of the second is turned over to an equal admiration of Christianity. And Henry James's point was that we cannot admire opposites equally. Somebody, very likely it was Vernon Lee, said that an artist could admire a Raphael and a Rubens, one as much as the other. Henry James answered: intellectually, perhaps, as craftsmen, Raphael and Rubens may be admired equally, but the admirer must, if he tell the truth, admit to a prepossession in favour of one painter or the other. He may think *The Descent from the Cross* and *The Transfiguration* great pictures, but if human nature overrules our intellect in art, he continued, causing a bias that our intellect does not approve, how much more potent it must be in religion, religion being dependent altogether on our emotions for support. How well he reasons, I said to myself, and lost several sentences, for the thought was still in my mind that literature had lost an excellent critic. It may have been a minute or five I was away, I know not, but when I heard him again he was telling that in a certain chapter towards the end of the second volume Pater took Christianity under his personal wing, diminishing thereby the æsthetic value of his work and unnecessarily, for in the next chapter he allows us to see the power that Christian ceremonial exercises on Marius. His words are—— May I have the book, Miss Robinson? Mary returned with the book and James read: What has been on the whole the method of the Church as a power of sweetness and patience in dealing with matters like Pagan art was already manifest; it has the character of the divine moderation of Christ himself. Now no human or divine being, James said, laying the book aside, was ever less moderate than Christ himself, and it is hard for me to believe that Pater read the Gospels so carelessly that the outbursts escaped his notice. But my dear Mr Henry James, Pater wishes to present Jesus in two aspects. It seems to me, Miss Robinson, the words divine moderation present him in one. Pater may hint darkly that there is another side, but he keeps that other side out of sight, but if we say any more we shall be provoked into a morass of Biblical disputation; so I will say that when Miss Vernon Lee spoke as she did just now of Renan, I understood her to mean that Pater adopts a tone as conciliatory as Renan. I have praised Pagan civilisation, but you shall see in a moment how nicely I can speak about Christian. But would you not have had him speak nicely about Christian civilisation, Mr James? interposed Mabel Robinson, who held fast to Christianity in its orthodox forms; and thinking that perhaps Henry James had said enough, Mary Robinson broke in gaily: I'm afraid Pater will not come in to-day to hear us talking about him. But does Pater come here? I said. I didn't know that you knew him. Yes; he used to live in Oxford, but he has come to live in London at Number Seventeen Earl's Terrace, only three doors from here. You're sure to meet him this week or the week after.

The reader may be sure that I did not fail to turn into the Robinsons' on the next at-home day. But Pater did not come, not on that day nor on the following Tuesday. But one day Mary said: Pater is coming to-day, he told me so this morning; you won't be disappointed again. And again I waited, talking to my friends mechanically, thinking all the while of the great moment when the door would open and the servant would say: Mr Walter Pater.

CHAPTER 10.

AFTER that day I often went to his house to be absorbed in its soothing greys: a quiet harmony where conversation was always kind; a little too formal, perhaps, for my taste. He lived with his two sisters, writing, I think, in a room above the drawing-room; one heard him walking to and fro, for his tread was heavy, but when he came down all trace of literary anxiety had disappeared from his face; and picking up the thread of the conversation that his sisters and I were dragging to and fro he continued it, each sentence carefully poised, many of them containing the words: no doubt.

I went to his house to luncheon and to dinner, and in the afternoons had long talks with him, and sometimes we went out to walk together. But before I relate our friendship let me tell how Pater appeared to me: almost as one of those ugly uncouth figures one meets with at the end of terraces, in lead rather than in stone, with large overarching skulls. I thought of the poet Verlaine, and while contrasting the disorder of the poet's jacket with the scrupulous refinement of the neck-tie evocative of long minutes of careful consideration, I pondered on the great military moustache that had seemed at first a discrepancy, but which had now begun to seem an essential part of him who wished above all things to preserve his real self for himself and to present to the world, even to his friends, a carefully prepared aspect—a mask. The beginning of each visit was always a little frigid, but at the close of the third Pater proposed we should go for a walk, and it was while sitting on a seat in Kensington Gardens in the Long Walk that I noticed the yellow dog-skin gloves that he wore punctiliously. There is something of the vicar in Pater, I said, a vicar who has got somehow mixed up with a cavalryman, and immediately after this thought crossed my mind I remembered that he had always appeared to me as an ugly man, which was strange. For whosoever bears a great intelligence within him is never ugly; the intelligence illumines and informs, real ugliness is found only in small, narrow, arid brows, I said, and looked up with the intention of finding justification in his features for my belief in his almost fantastic ugliness, but none was apparent in them; and it was not till I withdrew my eyes from his moveless countenance that I apprehended the cause—a mask, I cried, to myself; and fell to seeking his reasons for the assumption of so hideous a disguise, and why it was never dropped, not once during the first few weeks of our acquaintanceship.

It was on that seat in the Long Walk that I became aware I was sitting by the real Pater, and it was on that seat in the Long Walk that I became aware that I was spying on Pater, which was unavoidable, for knowing how rich and varied his mind was in his writings the temptation was great to continue his friend, waiting, however difficult the waiting might be, till he could no longer withhold himself aloof, when, out of sheer weariness he would lay aside all parade of courtesy and politeness—in other words, lay aside his mask. He has, as I have said, lifted so many veils in his writings, revealed so much, that I must have patience, but it will take years; even so I must continue to spy upon him—the word spy is a hard one, but I like hard words. The word seems exaggerated, and caused a little shudder, but it is the only word that depicts the situation that Pater's shyness placed me in.

Moreover the artist considers nothing but his art, and it behoved me to understand Pater, but despite my genius for intimacy, I did not begin to feel that I had advanced myself in his till I told him how much I admired a certain paper, almost a story, in which a child recovering from a long illness takes pleasure in listening to the rustling of a flowering branch beyond his window. The title of your story was *The Child in the House.* It is many years since I read it, but while reading, those pages were my world. In his quiet, old-maidish way Pater said: I'm glad you like that paper, and as some of it seems to have passed out of your mind I will give you a proof, I've some upstairs; and when he returned with the proof in his hand, two long strips of paper, pulls the printer would have called them, it seemed to me that a favour beyond anything I had ever hoped to receive was about to be conferred upon me. Nor was I altogether wrong, for no more beautiful thing could be put into anybody's hands than that story, if one could call it a story, for Pater, knowing himself not to be altogether a story-teller, never plunged into story, but remained always a little outside, on the eve, as it were, and his imaginary portraits gain a dim subdued beauty from his scrupulous reverence of an art that was not his and which he did not wish to be his, preferring to glance into life and to dream on what he had half seen, half defined, rather than to pry and to take notes. And looked at from this side, the imaginary portraits are intimations of life rather than life as it seems in its passing. In *The Prince of Court Painters* he gives us a soul apart, lighting no other soul, lit with no light of its own, and visible to us through borrowed light: Watteau is away in Paris, and Jean Baptiste's sister dreams of Watteau's art and a little of her brother's. A satellite soul truly, as was Rembrandt's wife, but her pilgrimage was in person, and the sorrow we read on her face is real sorrow, but in Pater's portrait of Jean Baptiste's sister, only an illusive regret appears, if as much. Jean Baptiste's sister is not conscious of her regret; her sorrow, if it be one, is a dim radiance, the moon's sorrow, so to speak. So I was thinking one evening as I came away from the Robinsons already absorbed in meditations, for it was just as I turned out of Earl's Terrace into the High Street that I met Pater, and accosting him impulsively, I said: I've been reading you all this morning and talking about my reading to Mary, for you've written the most beautiful thing ever written. Astonished but not displeased at this abrupt interjection of myself into his life, Pater took my arm. The most beautiful thing, I continued, and began to tell of the woman who loved Watteau all her life almost without knowing it, for the word love is not pronounced in the story, till my store of words were exhausted; and in return for my cordial admiration of *The Prince of Court Painters* Pater walked a little way up the High Street with me. We returned to Earl's Terrace together, and it was at the opening of the Terrace from the High Street that I said: the woman in your story (Jean Baptiste's sister, if I remember right) is the only one in English fiction that I recognise as a woman by something more than mere external signs, beard, moustache or certain roundnesses. She is spiritually a woman, the being that Rembrandt painted. Pater's face changed expression and I saw that my meaning escaped him. But an east wind was blowing at the time, and thinking he might prefer to go indoors than to listen to my admiration of his writings any longer, I turned towards the Kensington railway station, but had not gone more than half-way when an overwhelming temptation seized me to go back and make plain my meaning. For some time I stood irresolute, unable to summon courage to knock at the door and explain to the servant that I should not detain Mr Pater long, but had something of great importance to tell him. It will seem rather silly, I murmured, but I could not do else than retract my steps. The servant seemed a long time coming, but she did come and I was shown up to the drawing-room. Mr Pater will be down presently, sir. He entered the drawing-room a little flurried. My dear Moore, what is——

I've come back for no better purpose than to tell you why your portrait of Jean Baptiste's sister is like Rembrandt's portrait of his wife. Your face told me you did not understand me, and as it is important to me not to seem a fool in your eyes I came back. My dear Moore! He put his hand upon my shoulder, and the mask dropped a little. In my opinion, I continued, it was Rembrandt who introduced women into art. But the Renaissance? said Pater. The Renaissance, I answered, understood women as odalisques, mere instruments of pleasure; and

Dürer caricatured women, but it was Rembrandt who first saw woman as man's satellite, pale and pensive, aware that man and not woman had created the world; and when he was inspired he painted them a little saddened by the knowledge, but kindly disposed withal. But do not think, Pater, that I wish to depreciate women or their influence in life. Few men have admired women more than I have. A very gracious woman once said in my presence: Trust G. M. to find something to say in favour of a woman, whatever her faults may be. All things certainly I would say in favour of women, and all things do for a woman, all but one, I would not lie for a woman; and however needful they are in our lives, and however delightful their influence is, still a woman is a satellite and it is to her honour that she is not ashamed to be one, no more ashamed is she than the moon; only man is ashamed—in other words, only a man is Christian.

Women have done some very pretty painting and written some delightful poems, but if we look into their faces we read there the sadness of the satellite; and this sadness Rembrandt painted in 1660 or thereabouts, but nobody has written it. Balzac, who read nature from end to end? But he did not realize it—not altogether in any work that I can remember at the moment. Not as you have done. And it was your genius that led you to place her in the town of Lille or Valenciennes, near to the country of Rembrandt. Or was it that Watteau came from some frontier town—which? It doesn't matter, Lille and Valenciennes are frontier towns, and there she is in one or the other, dreaming of Watteau's art, the only real woman in English literature. All you say, Moore, is very kind, and although your point of view escaped me in the High Street—a wind was blowing at the time, a keen wind, and I was in a hurry to get home—I do apprehend your meaning, and would like to ask you a question: Have I done in any other work of the kind that you perceive in

The Prince of Court Painters? Of course you have, Pater, the same art is in *Marius.* Pater's face changed a little, and I said to myself: he thinks that I have not understood his question; and I began to tell him the difference between *Marius* and every other prose narrative in the English language was its seriousness. You have given us a prose narrative, Pater, as serious as *The Excursion*, and have thereby done a great service, though it will be a long time before criticism will become aware of what you have done and your influence be felt. And there is another thing I'd like to say, Pater, You were upstairs dressing for dinner, no doubt, so I shall not detain you: a few sentences, that is all. Pater assured me that he was in no hurry; he was dining at home, and had an hour to spare if I cared to avail myself of it. What strikes me, I continued, apart from the seriousness that I find in your book, a seriousness which you must yourself be aware of and which contrasts with the triviality of Dickens and Thackeray and all the other hirelings in the pay of the circulating libraries, is that in writing about Marius you write about mankind rather than about the mere individual. For we have had story-tellers who have related fairly well how a man pursued an enemy down passages and through tapestried halls to see him at last disappearing through a panelled door; and there have been other story-tellers, a more numerous class, perhaps, who have related domestic estrangements, divorced wives who return to their old homes to rock an ailing child or to nurse a husband whose bones have been broken in a hunting accident. In the first instance the unfortunate wife takes advantage of her late relative's absence from home to see her child; in the second she has recourse to some trivial disguise, make-believe, but no writer except yourself, my dear Pater, has written a serious story in which jokes good and bad do not occur, in which the quality known as humour is omitted.

You were the first to discover in English literature that life is neither jocular nor melodramatic, and in that most beautiful of all chapters, White Nights, your object was not to tell a mere story, which when read is not worth reading a second time but to relate the states of consciousness through which Marius passes, his hopes, fears, aspirations and dreams, his interest in common things, those that always have and always will interest mankind, his interest in the culture of the vine and olive which has a peculiar grace of its own, and might well contribute to the production of an ideal dignity of character like that of nature itself in its gifted region. I wonder if you know how beautiful the page is on which those words occur. On the next page you relate that the ancient hymn, *Luna Novella*, was still sung by the people as the new moon grew bright in the west, and then those lovely words, almost fragrant words: The life of the widow, languid, shadowy, but with the poignancy of regret. And if I do not speak of his description of the slopes of Luna, it is because it does not throw light upon a side of your art that I wish to elucidate as well as the page in which you tell that a certain vague fear of evil, constantly in him, enhanced still further the sentiment of home as a place of tried security. And then you illustrate Marius's sense of some unexplored evil, ever dogging his steps with an anecdote: How one fierce day in early summer he came upon some snakes breeding as he walked along a narrow road and avoided that place ever afterwards. It made his sleep uneasy for many days; but best of all for my purpose is the passage in which you compare Marius to the young Ion in the beautiful opening of the play by Euripides, for this passage is applicable not to one man but to nearly all men. You were not writing about any individual but about mankind.

Pater waited till my vehemence had spent itself, and then he asked me if in doing all I said he had done he had not lost something of Marius's individual character. Of course you did, Pater, but you contrasted Marius with his friend Flavius, who is highly individualised. I am glad you think so, Pater said, but I did not do it for that reason or any particular reason. If you had you would not have done it so well, I answered, and next morning I wrote to him, saying that Marius was the great atonement for all the bad novels that have been written in the English language. And having put off all that lay heaviest upon my mind, I fell to thinking that in writing about Pater, critics of all sorts, high and low, big and small, have spoken about the inevitable word without having considered what they wished to say, content to repeat a set phrase. The inevitable word was Flaubert's invention, and was forced upon him because of his inability to write a long sentence, only short ones relieved by the startling adjective, and these are apt to get tiresome. Pater's complaint that Plato's sentences are long may be regarded as Pater's single excursion into humour, for however long Plato's sentences may be we can affirm with safety that none are longer than Pater's. It is true that Landor did not write long sentences, maybe for the sake of the dialogue; that may be the reason; but it was Pater's wont to include long parentheses and to continue his sentences with the aid of conjunctions, in the hope, and no vain one, of getting his prose to flow to a murmurous melody, rising and disappearing like water mysteriously. He said in *The Renaissance* that the tendency of all the arts is to aspire to the condition of music, his theory and his practice was the same, and if he had lived to hear *L'apèrs-midi d'un Faune*, he could not have done else but think that he was listening to his own prose changed into music by some sorcerer or sorcerers, malign or benevolent.

The inevitable word, which has proved of so much use to critics in filling up columns, was not sought by him, he found it without seeking; he sought the paragraph, and afterwards the page, and after the page the chapter. And the chapter was sought in its relation to the book; the book was always in his mind, and it was because he could concentrate on it that he is a greater writer than any of the Frenchmen we have fallen into the habit of talking about—the unfortunate Flaubert, whose power over words was so stinted that he found himself obliged in the end to limit his dialogue to How are you? or to Good-morning! And such repudiation of dialogue helped to formulate the naturalistic doctrine that dialogue was illiterate; despite Rabelais, Shakespeare and Balzac; all and sundry forgot that they must not only conquer dialogue, but, what is more difficult, patter.

Of what is known as purple passages, Pater is almost guiltless; only one is to be discovered, a flagrant sentimentality written about the Gioconda, a lady who never ceases to smile, as somebody has said, at the nonsense she hears talked about her every day in the Louvre. But Pater received compliments for his interpretation of her smile with a certain bland courtesy all his own. I was always sorry for him in those moments, and once took pity, interrupting an admirer with the assurance that the repaint was answerable for the plunger in deep seas, etc. A regrettable incident it is, truly, this passage, in a writer in whom exaggeration and emphasis are, and should be, almost absent. We would not wish, however, the passage away, for a little vulgarity is needed, surely, if a great writer must be made known to the public. It would not be easy to give reasons why a great writer should be made known to the public, but admitting that he must be made known, the purple passage in question will take the place of the jam that helps down the Gregory powder. And having explained away the plunger in deep seas as well as my small talent allows me to do, I should like to say that pictures of this sentimental kind cannot be considered otherwise than as literary misfortunes; for it is not true that bad pictures give birth to good literature. It may be well, or it may be ill to add to this a word of advice: that it is not wise for men of letters who have not painted themselves, who have never had their fingers in the gallipot and spent half their lives in studios in the company of painters to express opinions about particular pictures. It would do better, it seems to me, for them to write about the plastic arts remotely, as Pater did about the Greek marbles, especially about those with whom they are not acquainted directly, for direct acquaintance may lead us into direct appreciations, and these always seem foolish in the studios. It is true that the studios have their own mistakes in appreciation to explain away as best they can, so whichever way we turn we drop into paradox. Who would have thought that Pater would have seen a masterpiece in the Blenheim Raphael, and committed himself to the opinion that it is in this one that all Raphael's gifts came to perfect flower? One of Pater's biographers mentions that Pater hankered after Burne-Jones's pictures, an indiscretion on a par with a valet who betrays the fact that his master wears a wig. The episode about the plunger in deep seas humanised Pater sufficiently—that and his admiration of the Blenheim Raphael—and we might have been spared the too human tale of a fascination little short of disreputable. It will be said in Pater's defence that the picture was brought to London with much hurraying and shouting and asseverations that seventy thousand golden guineas were paid for it. And this defence should not be looked upon as special pleading; in such moments of popular judgment the best of us lose our heads; and Pater's admiration of Burne-Jones can be dealt with more summarily. For we do not read of it in his own words, but in those of a biographer who was, no doubt, recording some memory. But the biographer's memory is often untrustworthy, and we prefer to regard him as such, rather than to believe that a man could hanker after Burne-Jones and appreciate Botticelli as Pater certainly seems to have done in his too brief essay, the most beautiful thing, perhaps, in a book full of beautiful things.

Botticelli rises out of Pater's prose like a dream out of sleep, a young man inspired in his youth, in the April morning of the Renaissance, and in the prose moving along to a music fresh as flowers we see him painting his own portrait in the story of his own age in The *Primavera,* and doing it so succinctly, we may say so pointedly, that it is hard to discard the idea that he was aware of the Renaissance, and that he deemed himself the chronicler of it, though it may be, of course, that Botticelli was concerned only with the thought of the springtide that returns every year, but if this were so, and he was without any thought of the paganism that was returning to the world, why should he have introduced fauns and dryads into his picture? It is delightful to think that somebody knew he was born on the eve of a great age, a precursor of wonderful things to come, but of none more lovely than the early blossoms himself was bringing. What came after may be said to be more perfect, but none can be said to be more enchanting than the sweet girl advancing with all the gaiety of the season in her face, her white hands filled with flowers. In my memory of the essay there is little doubt that Pater must have often walked immersed in thoughts of a young man rejoicing in a world grown suddenly young again, who looked on himself, as I have said, as the chronicler of its beauty, his own genius seeming to him, not so much a personal gift, as one bestowed upon him for an almost divine purpose, that of making known to men their own wonderful beauty and the beauty of women and children, of mountains, flowers, of all things that the eye can see, and applying his gift with extraordinary joyousness to its task of calling on the sleepers, prone to turn round and fall back into the sleep of monasticism, to awaken and rejoice in the beauty of the morning. It is thus that Pater presents Botticelli to us, a young man between the ages of twenty and thirty, blithe, debonnair, with smiling eyes, long curls on his shoulder, and wearing a crimson vest. After thirty we lose sight of him. He does not seem to have had any middle age, and Pater avoids dwelling upon his old age when this first flower, and in many ways the most beautiful flower of the Renaissance, withered in the influence of a cruel theology that seemed to have passed away, but which had again stretched forth a claw setting this glad spirit illustrating Dante's monastic dream with a pencil that could not wholly forget the humanities of the Renaissance. Alas! Savonarola had gotten hold of him and the monk would have brought back the Middle Ages in all its ugliness if the good Pope Alexander had not ordered his burning. Of this monk there is little, it may be there is no mention of him in the essay, Pater's purpose being to set us dreaming of the young man who begins life so happily and ended it so sadly. The essay reads gaily, like an opera by Mozart, the prose rhythms rising and falling amid delightful suspensions of thought, each ordained to carry the music on till the book drops on the reader's knee and he sits asking himself if Pater has lost anything that literature can give, and if the noble pages that Fromentin consecrates to the genius of Ruysdael be not more legitimate. The temptation is sore within me to talk about Fromentin, but it will be more legitimate to continue telling Pater, a greater writer than Fromentin, whose name rises up in my mind only in his essay on Ruysdael, for in none other does he give us the painter as part and parcel of his works, inseparable as body from soul. Nor does Pater succeed twice in this great achievement; we get glimpses of Michelangelo, Leonardo and the residue, but no more. And it may be that after Botticelli, Pater's best portrait is Winckelmann, whose death is thrilling, and sheds a light upon his human nature and the origin of his love of Greek sculpture.

There are pages in *The Renaissance* as beautiful as any he has written, and the perfection is so flawless that it is difficult to perceive while reading that all are not equally inspired. Therefore the moral of the book is, though the inspiration be not always by us, it is our business to write beautiful pages, so that we may be prepared to receive the sacred flame when it shall choose to descend into our lantern; our care should be that the lantern be worthy of the flame when it comes. And these words lead me right up to the question that has been on the lips of whomsoever reads me.

Whence came that style, unlike all other styles? We know that Pater did not receive it from the moon, nor from a fairy, and through the indiscretion of a biographer we know it was not in the first paper that he wrote. So Pater's style was born of this earth, and may be traced back to its source, a thing, however, that the critics of great reading have not yet succeeded in doing; but what is may be discovered, and months and years went by in the quest of Pater's spring-head and source, but not till ten years ago was my hand guided by what we term accident to Goethe's *Italian Journey*, a book given to me by dear Edward, one that I had read here and there and wearied of, it seeming to me a pompous, empty narrative of a journey in Italy, lacking character, life and movement; the sort of book that our fathers and grandfathers used to put together when they returned home from the grand tour. And it was with casual eyes that I wandered once more through the pages, reading that Goethe was received by the flunkeys of a certain duchess, who conducted him up a staircase which he thought rather fine; on the next page that somebody put a carriage at his disposal so that he might drive out in the afternoon and admire the views; like the staircase, these seemed to him very fine; the next day he visited the museum, not to meet a lady, which would have been admirable, but to make a drawing of the Apollo, and I was about to lay the book aside wearily when my eyes alighted on a chapter entitled Saint Philip Neri. The first sentence caught my attention and I finished the page easily; the book then dropping on my knees I saw in a vision Pater in a great library, standing on the library steps reading a book he had taken from the shelves above him, and he continued reading for what seemed to me a long while, returning the book suddenly, but remaining (it was this that seemed strange), absorbed in thought, on the fifth step of the ladder. For what does he remain standing on the fifth step of the ladder? I asked myself. And of what is he thinking? In vision, however, almost everything is revealed to us, and I very soon began to learn, or it was borne in upon me, that he had been reading Goethe's study of Saint Philip Neri? Thoughts were flocking in his mind, and at last some of these were carried over into my mind, and I learned that he was not certain whether he should write an article on Goethe's style with special reference to Saint Philip Neri, or say nothing about it. He will never speak about it, my soul answered me, and my delicious faith in human nature was rewarded, for Pater woke from his reverie looking round to make sure he was not being watched, and finding himself alone in the library, he returned the book to its place, and having fully satisfied himself he had returned it to its exact place, he removed the steps to another part of the library and called to the librarian, to whom he put some questions regarding books dealing with the life and time of the troubadours.

My vision ended abruptly, which is the way of visions, and I said: how human, so human, that it must have been as I dreamt it, and picking up the book that had slipped from my knees to the floor I continued Saint Philip Neri a little further, stopping again and again to indulge myself in meditation, saying to myself: I have come upon Pater's origins, but if I make it known to the world it will be said that I have robbed Pater of part of his glory. On the other hand it will seem to many that my discovery will give Pater a literary father, a thing he needs; and how much greater than his father he is—his father redeemed from pomposity and endeared to us by a touch of nature as Wagner was by the publication of the Wesendonck letters. And to attach Pater to other human beings, to rescue him from isolation, shall be my task. I see it all, and, I think I see it clearly.

CHAPTER 11.

WHEN Pater lived in the Kensington house, it began to be known among his friends that he contributed anonymous articles on current literature to a weekly newspaper, and when we spoke of these articles among ourselves we expatiated in regret, and were at variance regarding his motive in writing these articles, for we did not know that the master could weave a fine silken woof out of such a poor thread as current literature, saying it could hardly be for the money they brought in, till at last Arthur Symons began to put forward the explanation, a partial one, which will not find ready acceptance, that Pater did not wish to miss altogether his connection with the passing hour. Every life, said Symons, however secluded, needs an outlet. I find mine in the ballet, and he finds his in *The Guardian*.

An explanation this is of Pater's journalism that would have been nearer the truth if it had been expressed less flippantly. Symons should have said: if Pater had been discovered writing for *The World*, or *Truth*, his position would be as difficult as mine would be were I to praise the last new dancer at the Alhambra; but *The Guardian* is a thoughtful Protestant paper, and in his key though he is not a Christian. Quite true Pater liked the Protestant convention, and the belief was never very far from him that it is by the acceptation of the traditional and the formal that we escape from the fretful. A great deal of Pater was in his reverence for tradition, usage and Symons should have noted the physical likeness that the beautifullest poet and prose writer of our generation bore one to the other. He did not do this, an oversight, nor did he draw attention to the fact that the likeness was not a mere bodily likeness, for both poet and prose writer were Agnostics, great adherents to religious conventions, two different conventions, it is true, but the difference concerns only the theologians, for in these modern days respect for ancient usages and traditions takes the place of faith. It may be doubted if Verlaine would have consented to flout his conventions by any public act or printed word; that Pater would not flout his is beyond dispute, and that is why I cannot but wonder at my lack of perception when one day, remembering suddenly that he wrote essays for *The Guardian*, I sent him a book I had just written, with a note asking him to review it. If I were to tell the theme, the subject of this book, it would not be difficult for anyone to apprehend the embarrassment Pater must have felt on glancing through my pages. It is sufficient to say that the subject was not one that could be discussed in *The Guardian*, even by such a master of words as Pater, and I can imagine him laying the book aside and walking to and fro, along and across the room above the drawing-room, his workroom, till at last, wearied out, he sat down to write an answer, an answer that demanded all his mastery over language; indeed, several draftings had to be written before he succeeded in expressing himself truthfully, yet without giving offence. Would that that letter had not passed from me, for it was an example of his power to compel words, to convey his soul's meaning, yet without departing from that graciousness from which he could not separate himself, it being himself. But to the letter! I shall tell in vain that he said that he was no proper critic of the story I sent him, and that the object of violent acts was not clear to him. He said something very like that, and he may have added that the object of art is to enable us to forget the crude and the violent. But even if I could recall the substance of the letter itself, little would be gained, but the substance of such a letter, if not of all letters, is the common property of mankind. Thoughts cannot be original, for all have been uttered thousands of years ago. We are ourselves only in the pattern we weave, and Pater's beautiful pattern, as explicit in his letters as in his works, cannot be produced by me, which is a pity, for his letters to me would help readers to penetrate the mind that wrote *Marius* and set Jean Baptiste's sister dreaming of Watteau away in Paris, without thinking that she loved him. It seems to me that I am repeating myself, but on certain points of character we need not be afraid of repetition. However slight the note was his genius was in it and that graciousness which we associate with Raphael—a very Pateresque painter in those pictures in which none had a hand but he. A more perfect artist than Raphael, for Raphael left many bad pictures and work accomplished by subordinates, but Pater was only once guilty, in my opinion, of a passage that was unworthy of him. Mr Gosse may speak of a few waxen passages, saying that Pater's genius ranked very high indeed when his genius was present, but unfortunately——let him who cares to do so finish this sentence. He will have no difficulty in finding a suitable end among the many insipid articles that have been written about the greatest master of English prose. Ah! had I not lost the letter. To look for it again would be useless, and to seek its contents in my memory would be vain. Were I to seek it, that passage about the Gioconda would not fail to rise from deep seas to tantalise me. So I will forget the Gioconda and pass on to something which is to my credit, that for no single moment nor fraction of a moment did I hold Pater's judgment regarding my book in question. One does not argue about literature with Pater; was it Gautier who said: One does not discuss theology with God? Once more to my story. After folding up his letter and putting it away, torn in half in fretful moment, I said to myself: The only thing to be done is to write another book, and try to forget this ridiculous mistake of mine. At that time I was engaged on another, one which was nearing completion, and I began to ask myself if Pater could be interested in a narrative about an immoral young man who went to Paris in quest of art? the *Confessions* were then appearing in an obscure periodical, and I did not even suspect they might come into his hands. A few days afterwards, on seeing Pater's beautiful, precise handwriting on the envelope, I said: Good heavens, he is not going to write to me again about that unfortunate——

It was part of Pater's style not to insist, to refrain from what is familiarly known as rubbing it in; a copy of the magazine in which I was writing my *Confessions* had come into his hands, and his style—*le style c'est l'homme*—compelled him to tell me how much he admired my appreciations of the modern French poets; to compensate me, I said, for his first letter, which has rankled in his mind longer than in mine. Ah, if that letter had not been lost, too, a good deal of Pater's would illuminate this page. The third letter, the letter he wrote to me when he received his copy of *The Confessions of a Young Man*, was sought in febrile excitement for many hours. At last my secretary came into the room, rousing me from the lethargy of despair into which I had fallen. Is this the letter you were looking for? I found it at the bottom of the bookcase.

BRASENOSE COLLEGE,
March 9th.

MY DEAR, AUDACIOUS MOORE,—

Many thanks for the *Confessions*; which I have read with great interest and admiration for your originality—your delightful criticisms—your Aristophanic joy, or at least enjoyment, in life—your unfailing liveliness. Of course, there are many things in the book I don't agree with. But then, in the case of so satiric a book, I suppose one is hardly expected to agree or disagree. What I cannot doubt of is the literary faculty displayed. Thou com'st in such a questionable shape! I feel inclined to say, on finishing your book; shape morally, I mean; not in reference to style.

You speak of my own work very pleasantly; but my enjoyment has been independent of that. And still I wonder how much you may be losing, both for yourself and for your writings, by what, in spite of its gaiety and good-nature and genuine sense of the beauty of many things, I must still call a cynical, and therefore exclusive way of looking at the world. You call it only realistic. Still!

With sincere wishes for the future success of your most entertaining pen.

Very sincerely yours,
WALTER PATER.

It had fallen amid the dust through a crack, I suppose, and for three or four days, for a week, perchance, during my walks, and whilst sitting by the fire, thoughts of Pater's letter overflowed my mind, keeping me awake at night, and no sleep was gotten till the morning dusk began to divide the curtains, for nothing else seemed worth thinking about; and it seemed to me as if I had become possessed of a happiness that could not die. A happy week it was that I spent certainly with that letter always uppermost in my mind; no blighting thought going by till Henry James's contention of insincerity, and the proof he had advanced in support of it was remembered—Pater's wish to hunt with the Pagan hounds and run with the Christian hare, to *racommoder la chèvre et le chou*, was remembered, with a sudden gust of resentment. And it was in an intemperate moment that I said to myself: we should be always on our guard against these sudden sallies of feeling. Pater's letter is proof that Henry James's contention was not altogether a false one, and I took the letter up and read: And still I wonder how much you may be losing, both for yourself and for your readers.

The insincerity that Henry James complained of was the complaint of the sinner against the almost virtuous man, for James never came to terms with anything but perhaps terraces and cigarettes and was not relished even by his admirers till he became a little rank; his mind decayed slowly; we were still far from *The Wings of the Dove*, but even in *The Two Magics* there was flavour that reminded me of a discussion overheard by me in a third-class carriage:

I can't think, said the first footman, what on earth the gentry can see in their birds till they begins to hum. More can't I, the second footman answered, adding, after a long pause: all the same, I must say I likes my fish a bit off.

James was withal a shrewd critic of literature, and it is to his credit to have detected an insincere accent which I refused to listen to. But alas, Pater's letter is a warrant for James's criticism; he admonishes me to show myself in only carefully prepared aspects; and on looking into the letter again I saw that I had misread Pater's letter. The word readers did not occur in it, and I muttered aloud, as is my wont when engaged with thoughts of singular interest to me: how perfectly Pater writes. Here is an instance: And still I wonder how much you may be losing, both for yourself and your writings. He does not speak of readers; he is very subtle and cannot be caught out by such as James. Ah, had he been present to answer him! I muttered, and it seemed to me that my admiration of Pater rose higher and became, as it were, a fresh exaltation. Yet the thought that the letter was an admonition to put on a mask could not be kept out of my mind, and instead of bringing us closer together the letter divided us. I wished for a more complete friendship, for a constant interchange of ideas, and could not doubt that Pater wished to help me. Yet our friendship did not advance, we seemed to be drifting apart, and puzzled to account for this estrangement, I complained to Symons of Pater's reserve. He did not feel Pater to be reserved, he said. But was it that Pater was not reserved with Symons, or was it that Symons did not aspire to the same intimacy as I did? Symons said that Pater did not like being accosted while out walking, for he went out to meditate on what he had written that morning and to consider what he would write next morning. I did not ask myself whether Symons was right or wrong, but accepted what he said as the truth, for it was easy to believe that Pater looked upon interruptions in his walks as inconvenient breaks in his meditations. So I resolved never to accost him again, never to take his arm and walk a little way with him, as had been my custom. It was not long after this resolve that I met him in Knightsbridge, and remembering that I had been told that I must not accost him in his walks, I crossed over the road, and as I did so our eyes met. Pater's glance was sidelong, suspicious, reproachful, a glance which I sought to interpret as one of gratitude, but was not quite sure. The not quite sure lay far back in my mind for Symons's warning that I must not interrupt Pater in his walks was accepted without question. How it fell out that Symons's admonition was listened to and acted upon without misgiving in a matter so important as my almost affectionate relations with Pater, cannot be explained except by the admission that there is incurable frivolity in me. But this admission is not sufficient, for it has just come to me that about the time I am speaking of I was beginning to weary of Pater—of his shyness. I sought him out no longer, and though Pater did not show that he resented my conduct when we came together at dinner and luncheon in the houses of common friends he must have felt that something had befallen us.

I was no longer interested in Pater, in fact I began to laugh at him behind his back, so altogether lost did he seem, so like an albatross on deck, to borrow a simile from Baudelaire, as he sat at the dining-board of a young Russian Jew, prepense to place him, between two ladies whose bosoms overflowed their bodices, large full-blown roses, exchanging peaceable and amiable remarks, doing his best to keep them both entertained. It became a matter of wonderment to me why Pater should accept invitations to this house or to another house in which I used to meet Pater—that of an elderly peeress who liked men of letters much as she liked her crewel work, and the iron she hammered in a back room upstairs. Pater used to attend her parties, silent, polite, formal, never seemingly annoyed with himself for accepting her invitations as I often was, for the thought was always in my mind of the hours I wasted in these entertainments, hours that I might have spent more profitably on other things. Pater's conduct seemed to be even more inexcusable than mine, for he did not write about society. He was at this time a mystery to us all, even to Symons.

Neither Symons nor another guessed the reason why Pater accepted invitations from almost everybody who invited him. Not one of us suspected that he reasoned with himself in this fashion: I have come to live in London, and to avoid society while living in London would be neither decorous nor seemly. It would be worse, it would be an admission—Pater came to London as an experiment. He wanted to live, to join up, to walk in step, without, however, giving himself away, and I think all his friends experienced a certain sense of relief when they heard that he had returned to Oxford.

There is a drama in what I am writing, that of a man who perhaps sought to open his heart to others, who wished to take the world into his confidence perhaps, but who, if he did, found himself unable even for a single unaffected friendship. But, as has been said, none was aware of the drama that was unfolding itself. All we knew was that Pater had returned to Oxford, and we supposed that he felt Oxford to be a more suitable background for his taste and genius than London. Symons's insight may have been deeper than mine; now I am speaking for myself alone, I suspected nothing. It was a little disturbing that Pater should have come to London and returned to Oxford, but I suspected nothing. Why should I? I had lived in France, left France, come to live in London, and might return and finish my days in France! But one day something happened to open my eyes, and Pater's soul became plainer. The editor of *The Daily Chronicle* stopped me in the Strand, saying that he had a review of my book of *Modern Painting* in type, written, he said, by the greatest writer in the world. Whom you think the greatest writer in the world, I said. No, whom you think the greatest writer in the world, he answered. But I do not know who I think the greatest writer in the world; tell me. No, he replied; one of these days you will see the name in the paper, and you will agree with me that the writer of the article is the greatest writer in the world.

Sir Henry Norman was then the literary editor of the *Chronicle*, and I often went to his house to beg him to tell me who was the greatest writer in the world, but it was impossible to persuade him, and every morning, after a restless night, I jumped out of bed to look for the article. Four mornings passed; a week went by; another week. One morning of the third week I overslept myself, and awaking suddenly, I said: the *Chronicle*. Out of bed I was in a jiffy; and a unique moment in my life it was when I caught sight of the heading, *Modern Painting*. Now, I said, I shall know who is the greatest writer in the world. . . . Walter Pater! The next thing to do was to read the article, and before beginning it I said: my pleasure would have been greater if I had read it before looking to see who wrote it. However, that cannot be helped now. The article was good; it delighted me, like everything that Pater wrote, but I could not help feeling that it did not compare favourably with the short articles that he contributed to *The Guardian*. A beautiful article it was, for it could not be else, since Pater wrote it, the same grace, the same simplicity, the same power of saying exactly what he was minded to say. I ought to be grateful, and I felt a little ashamed of myself for not admiring the article more than I did, and began to think that the source of it lay in his desire to acknowledge that I had written, as he put it, very pleasantly about himself in *The Confessions of a Young Man*. But was that why he praised me? Scratch me, and I'll scratch you. No, Pater's mind did not move in such mediocre honesty. But there must be a reason. Others had praised Pater more abundantly, yet he did not write about the books of everyone who had praised him, and the articles he wrote for *The Guardian* were unsigned, but this one was a signed article. Another reason, and a pleasant one if one considers it, rose up in my mind. Pater knew that I was disappointed at not receiving as much of his personal friendship as I had wished for, and wrote this article as a way of recompense for what he felt was my due. I probed my fancy, I dabbled in psychology. But no better reason than this last one could I find for Pater's article—a wish to please me, a wish to please me. It must have been something personal, I said. He did not review the book merely because it took his fancy, and awakening from my memory, I added: a letter must be written at once, thanking him. It was written, but no answer came back, and I said: the account is closed. Pater and I have passed from each other, but I did not guess at the time that we were about to be separated for ever.

A few months later Pater died suddenly, and I said: now I shall never know why he wrote the article about *Modern Painting*. Years went by, and it was not until the other day, when looking through *The Renaissance* I came upon the celebrated passage that I was guilty of condemning as unworthy—guilty of condemning, for what have I written that gives me the right to judge Pater? A greater sinner now am I than Gosse, and as a punishment for my sin I say: I'll read this passage carefully, comma by comma, semicolon by semicolon, full stop by full stop. And this thing I did, and rose from it understanding Pater as I had never understood him before. Behind the mask, I said, that he did not lift, that he could not lift, was a shy, sentimental man, all powerful in written word, impotent in life.

CHAPTER 12.

WE do not know how deeply love has gone into us until death robs us; till we have wept over the corpse. It was thus with me. I did not know how I loved Paris (my Paris) till I found myself yesterday in the neighbourhood of Place Pigalle, looking round for the familiar aspects and signs of the artists and the *petite bourgeoisie* who used to live there in the seventies and eighties. The Nouvelle Athènes, whither Manet, Degas, Pissarro, Débutin, Forain, Catulle Mendès and Paul Alexis used to come in the evening; the beloved café in which I learned French and all I know of literature and art still poked its nose out into the Place, but how changed! Now it is the tryst of a ferocious cosmopolitanism, come up from the Grand Hotel, lured thither by the promise of mendacious guides. From the Nouvelle Athènes I crossed over to Rat Mort, *le café en face*; it too had been transformed and commercialised, with the house by it in which Fromentin lived, a capable painter, and one of the most beautiful writers of French prose (I used to see him walking across the Place in the morning, looking like an Arab, having become like the Arabs from long residence in the desert), turned into a restaurant to which tourists come to dine with their guides and are taken by them to the Moulin Rouge to see a few women dancing for hire, for even gaiety has been commercialised, I said; and fell to thinking of La Reine Blanche and La Boule Notre, two dear little *bals*, only known to the Montmartre kin, to the workgirls and their swains, *les voyous du quartier*, *bals* whose names recall absinthe, and *La Valse des Roses* blared on a cornet.

And as I stood watching the pretty patterns that the dangling leaves cast about me a memory of the Boule Noire came back, a memory, not of the *bal*, but the restaurant: I have brought you your wife's letters, and have the honour to inform you that she spent last night with me, said a short, thick-set young man in a deep bass voice. He had come into the restaurant some while after a wedding party had passed up the stairs to the saloons in which all the weddings of the *quartier* feasted on their return from Church, parties of a dozen or fifteen small tradesmen in their Sunday best, and in their midst the bride, in white lace and orange blossoms, with, as Huysmans would remark, a look of greedy anticipation on her face at the pleasure that had been prepared for her, her dress, the breakfast, the cake, the drive to Bois, and, of all, the pleasure of being broached. The young man, who had come into the restaurant, addressed the waiter hurriedly, asking if a wedding party had gone upstairs, and the waiter, believing him to be one of the guests, offered to conduct him. But he seated himself at a table and called for a vermouth, which he sat sipping moodily, so it seemed to the guests and to the waiters who, after the event, conferred together, and it was remembered that a certain accent of nervous irritation had transpired in his voice when the waiter answered his call, bill-of-fare hand: Quand je serai prêt à déjeûner je vous demanderai la carte. Encore un vermouth. It seemed to me (afterwards of course) that the waiter suspected something, and that it could not have been else than that the man was brooding a mischief while he sat drinking glass after glass of vermouth; for three glasses of vermouth before breakfast are very unusual.

As soon as the wedding-party was heard coming down the stairs, he jumped to his feet, and then I knew something was going to happen. The dining saloon was traversed by a laurel hedge designed to protect the wedding-parties from the scrutiny of the casual visitor, but between the leaves something of what happened appeared, something of the cool effrontery with which the young fellow addressed the bridegroom. I have brought you your wife's letters, and have the honour to inform you that she spent last night with me. The bridegroom had no time to collect his wits; no cane was raised to strike, I am sure of that; no further words were spoken. A tragedy seemed to fall and to melt, and before we realised what had happened we saw the bride going away with her friends to the left, and the bridegroom with his to the right. The wedding-party vanished like a dream, including the vermouth drinker, almost as suddenly as a dream; and the waiter's words, as he cleared the table, float back over the storms of forty years: Heureusement je lui ai fait payer les trois vermouths. Curiously reminiscent, are they not, of Leperello's last words: Mes gages, mes gages?

The Elysée Montmartre is not less memorable than the Boule Noire: it was there I met and talked with the great Tourguéneff: for his words the curious are referred to *Impressions and Opinions.* The Bal too still continues a precarious existence, sometimes it is open, sometimes it is in bankruptcy. But how can it continue, I said, since the artists and the *grisettes* have gone? The restaurant of Père Lathuille, in which Manet painted his celebrated picture; that too is a memory. And the Cirque Fernando, an old haunt of mine and of Alexis's—was not the heroine of his witty comedy, *Monsieur Betsy*, an *ecuyére* of that circus?—has disappeared, and in its place I saw a row of new houses, iron girders covered with a little lath and plaster, through which the lodgers hear every sound and divine smells from sounds. Modern comforts are provided, no doubt—bathrooms! we washed less in the seventies, but we wrote better and painted better; and leaving the point undecided whether art and cleanliness are incompatible, I turned into the Rue Laval, now called Rue de Victor Massé, my feet finding their way instinctively into the Rue Pigalle, and from thence into the Rue de Douai, where Ludovic Halévy once lived, in that house yonder, No. 22. It was there I used to meet Reyer, Meilhac and Degas. But a great deal of memory would be required to mention all the celebrities that I once met in that house—celebrities of a celebrated age—or to give any adequate idea of the elation that a young man feels at finding himself at last in the very centre of Parisian society. How the noise of the street has increased, I said, and for it Halévy left it, a few months before his death. No man of letters will live there again.

At the bottom of the Rue des Martyrs there was once, I remembered, an old-fashioned restaurant, Le Faisan Doré, and after passing the Place Saint Georges, I turned to the left to see if it still existed. It too was among the gone, and I passed by the Church of Notre Dame de Lorette, a church that I had passed by a thousand times in the seventies (I must have passed it as often as that, for my way home led by it) without ever experiencing any faintest inclination to look inside it. But now curiosity almost prevailed, for only churches remain unchanged. The great boulevards had changed as much as the Boulevard Extérieur. It is many years since Tortoni passed away, and of its company few are left, but the little circle of chairs round the corner of the Rue Taitbout is fixed in the minds of the remnant, and all of them filled by the great artists of thirty years ago. At five o'clock in the afternoon Tortoni was a pious observance, the fulfilment of the Parisian day; our rule, our practice, and our pride. Manet was often there, Charpentier always, Scholl too—Scholl the terrible *chroniqueur*, whose wit everyone dreaded. But where is the Café Anglais? Gone! Of the Café Riche only the name survives, brought up to date; all white paint and gold, a dazzle of electric light wherein a band improvises the same piteous pieces evening after evening.

Everyone who knew Paris thirty years ago, and who knows it to-day, however superficially, knows that café life is over in Paris. There are no more cafés for the Parisians. Catulle was the last that was faithful to his café; till the day of his death he sat in the Café Napolitan over yonder, surrounded by followers and friends, and out of respect for his memory I crossed the boulevard and sought for a chair in his corner. But all were occupied, and by whom? By a strange nondescript crowd from all parts of the globe. Yea, truly, Paris is changed. There are no more Parisians, I said, and continued my meditative walk, noticing as I went how much the streets had suffered from modern taste—almost every street, the Rue de la Paix, perhaps, most of all. Among modern monstrosities the Hotel Mirabeau takes first place easily. A marble front in variegated marbles, and a marble hall in which I am not sure that a fountain does not play, can be imagined by my readers, and very little common-sense is required to understand how its cheap grandeur conflicts with the solid and excellent architecture of the Place Vendôme, one of the distinctions in Europe, protected, it is true, against progress by *une servitude*—that is to say, a limit is put upon the heights of the buildings. High roofs showed against a clear September sky as I passed by the dark slates contracting with the blue glitter. The architecture of the Rue Castiglione is First Empire, houses of three stories high, with small garrets making a fourth story, and these garrets are in beautiful proportion with the windows and the doorways and the width of the street. *La servitude* still holds good there, the stone cannot be touched, but in one place a high garret has been added, and it is in such flagrant violation of all proportion that one turns away thinking that sense of proportion has left the world for ever. Other things have come, railways and motor cars, perhaps aeroplanes, but for better or worse a sense has been lost, that of proportion, I muttered, as I crossed the street into the Tuileries Gardens, propelled by a sudden thought, for Manet had painted a crowd of Third Empire notorieties under the trees: the women in bonnets and crinolines, the men in braided coats and trousers and chimney-pot hats. In those days there was a mode. No one now goes to the Tuileries but nurserymaids and children. In the old days the children went with their mothers; there are two in Manet's foreground, scratching amid the gravel, and when Sir Hugh Lane, who had been knighted according to Sickert for admiring Manet, stood in front of this picture explaining to Steer that the woman in the blue bonnet was La Marquise de Gallifet, and the woman in the yellow gown La Comtesse de Castiglione, and the man talking to her Le Prince—Steer, gently interrupting, said: And the two children in pink and blue frocks are, I suppose, Ricketts and Shannon, an excellent joke, but one which will not be appreciated outside of certain studios.

But there are gardens with which my past is more intimately associated than that of the Tuileries—Bullier! and wondering if the commercialisation of my beloved city would end with the Rue de Rivoli, I crossed the Seine. Have the bookstalls gone too? I asked myself. No; there are still bookstalls, and the quays seem much the same. At last, I said, I am coming to Paris.

And in the Rue du Bac everybody was speaking French. It was pleasant to hear the familiar language after the babble of foreign tongues in Rue de Rivoli. And there were women in *peignoirs*, too, with baskets on their arms buying things in the shops. This is Paris, I said, the Paris that I knew long ago. The faces too were French, and scanning them eagerly as I went by, feeling myself almost a phantom, I turned into the great street which leads to the Théâtre de l'Odéon, the Rue—I will not attempt the name. Sometimes we forget the name of a street in which we know the aspects of every house, but the belly remembers when the head forgets, and I could not do else than look across the way for the Restaurant Foyot. It was where it ever was, but it was still too early to think about *omelettes*, and after passing round the galleries of the theatre I came upon a long-haired student loitering in the Rue Vaugirard, reading, I said, as he walks.

Si vous êtes du Quartier Latin peut-être . . . and from him I learned the almost unwelcome news that Bullier was not going to be pulled down, but rehabilitated with all sorts of new splendours, and attractions. It only means, I answered, that the fate of the Quartier Latin will be the same as Montmartre, and after five minutes' talk we bade each other good-bye. His way was to the Sorbonne, mine to the Luxembourg Gardens, and the sad, romantic air of these gardens helped me to view indulgently an old priest reading his breviary in the sun, and to adjust my mind to Julian who, when on his way to make war on the Persians, found all the temples in ruins, and no trace of the ancient worship left except one old priest with a goose in his lap, which he had come to offer in sacrifice. Very soon I came upon Pierrot, escaped from some studio, eating his breakfast, sharing it with the sparrows, and a little further on three young women went by, nuns, walking amid the falling leaves. One passed suddenly in front of the others, and with a quick, dancing step reached out her hand to catch a leaf, and the spectacle of this group of three had not passed out of my mind when I caught sight of a strange, big fellow, a countryman he seemed, come up from the country in his Sunday best, sitting in a sunny corner, his face covered with his hands, in an attitude of such deep dejection or of philosophic calm that I repeated a line heard over night in the theatre:

Il songe aux blés fauchés qu'on ne fauchera plus, a last attempt to sentimentalise the tramp. Plutôt: Il songe aux pains mangés qu'on ne mangera plus. Voilà le vrai Chemineau; and while considering the emptiness of the line, which all the same fell in somehow with my sentimental mood, I continued my search for a piece of monumented wall, hidden in the shadow of trees, but not finding it where I expected to find it, an appeal for direction was made to the limonadier, who explained my mistake, while I drank, so clearly, that soon after I found the great Neptune, who, as of yore, poured water from his urn in the cool recesses of the stonework. It was pleasant to find that the naiad had not escaped from her young man, nor he from her; they embraced as eagerly as of yore. Art alone is eternal, I said; the bust outlasts the city. Red leaves are falling into the basin, and the carp hangs motionless in the still water, a little redder than the leaves. How beautiful all this is, I continued, and how beautiful yon roofs, high pitched against the glitter. Our word castle evokes only images of moats and portcullises and rough life; but the French word château is evocative of the great kings of France; as we say it we see their curled wigs flowing over their shoulders, their gold-headed canes in their hands, and about them are many beautiful women in hooped skirts that match the balustraded parterres. But the great monarchical epoch has passed away, cried I, the castle is now a museum, the property of the public; and the thought that it might be wise to renew acquaintance with certain pictures was brushed aside, the day was much too beautiful to see pictures, and the Ministre des Beaux Arts has collected too much bad sculpture in his gallery, so I remained outside, admiring the high-pitched roofs and the balustraded parterres full of autumn flowers: for a few more days, geraniums, begonias, dahlias, will hang over the edges of the vases. One or two or three more weeks of sunny weather, and then winter. But why, alas? Is it not strange that we cannot enjoy things as they go by, glad that nothing, not even ourselves, is with us always, for how weary we should be of all we see and hear, and of ourselves too, if we, like them, were else than passengers. And it was at that moment of philosophical reflection that the man who had seemed to me a few minutes before to be thinking of *Les blés fauchés qu'on ne fauchera plus* passed me by, walking with a subdued air, like one absorbed in some deep sorrow, like a man so indifferent to the things of this world that the next has ceased to interest him. A great sorrow certainly is on him, I said. But he is not a peasant: a mechanic, more likely, come up in his Sunday best; and while considering his clothes, roughly cut, in black broadcloth, the large sombre hat that almost hid his dark-complexioned face from me, which set me thinking of the tropics—a colonist from Algeria, I said; and believing my guess to be a good one I hastened my pace, pausing when I overtook him so that he might speak to me if he wished. But he showed no inclination to avail himself of the opportunity to escape from himself; nor did his aloofness abate when we crossed each other later; he passed on, a broad-shouldered man, whose only desire seemed to be to pace by himself with hanging head, without a thought for the passers-by or the different aspects of the Gardens. Then feeling that I must make the advances I addressed to him one of those questions with which we try to beguile a fellow-traveller into conversation, for a traveller he was like myself, though he may have only come up from Fontainebleu. My question may have been no more than to be told the time of day, or which is the way to the picture gallery; whatever it was, the traveller answered it in a tone that encouraged further remarks; and we walked through the Gardens together, looking at the statues and talking on various subjects, as men do on such occasions until the spring of a mutual interest discovers each to the other. My curiosity in the man was to learn if he were a traveller, and before we came back to the Neptune and the naiad I had learned from him that he was a Breton and had spent many years in Panama—a surveyor, an engineer, something of that sort, one of the many who had gone out with Lesseps; his two brothers had been with him on the isthmus and he had left them there; and himself had only just escaped death by a miracle, for he had been out in the bush, devoured by fever for two days and without water. It was not till the third day he had succeeded in reaching the encampment. It seemed a gracious thing to do to lead him round to where the limonadier was stationed, and he allowed me to offer him some of the harmless drinks that were on sale; he ate some cakes, and I gathered that there were misfortunes of a personal kind, and from a slight hint concluded that his married life had not been happy, but I lacked courage to probe him with any direct question; and was not able to discover his religious views, only that he clung to his religion, for without some hope, he said, of a future life, this would be intolerable, and he would lack courage to start forth again to Panama, this time to work with the Americans who had undertaken the work that Lesseps had not been able to carry through. But how, I asked him will your desire to believe in things that you know are not true help you to live among things that at least seem true? He answered me hesitatingly, like one who is not accustomed to look into his own soul and to tell what is there. A pained expression stole into his face and I began to regret my question, and was glad when he said: you do not seem to have suffered as I have; your life has been a happy one. How do you know that? I asked. Your face tells me; you have a happy face. Do you think, then, that I am indifferent to the sadness of this September sunlight? You are aware, he said, of the sadness inherent in things and you indulge in this sadness, for it is your pleasure.

Once more I tried to tempt him into his life's story, but he wavered on the brink, and instead of telling it he asked me to tell him why I was in Paris, and I answered that I had come to Paris to give a lecture on Shakespeare and Balzac, to which he replied that he would like to come to hear my lecture. But my lecture may never be given, and in reply to his questions I told him that although the lecture was written, and the manuscript in my pocket, I dreaded the delivery of it more than anything in the world, for the Director of the *Revue Bleue*, who had organised the series of lectures, of which mine was one, was of opinion that I was a very bad reader. You read much too fast, he said. The ideas expressed in your lecture are ingenious and interesting, and the writing of it, though not exactly that of a Frenchman, is sufficient. As for the English accent, that is part of the entertainment, but what I would have you conquer is the tendency to read too fast. But last night I heard Racine spouted at the rate of three hundred words a minute. We know Racine by heart, he replied; if we didn't we should not understand a word the actor said. I confided to my casual acquaintance that it was very hard to read slowly; and there are other defects. I do not, I said, make all the liaisons, and I sometimes make wrong liaisons, what you call in French *des cuirs*. When do you give your lecture? he asked. At the end of the week, I answered, and we are now at the beginning of it. I shall not be here, for to-morrow I start for Panama, but it would be a pleasure to me to hear your lecture. A more quiet and secluded spot to read than the one we are in could not be found.

It seemed unkind, almost unseemly, to refuse to grant the traveller's simple request, and in other circumstances, no doubt, I should have granted it. But a plan whereby my difficulty might be overcome had just come into my mind, and to excuse myself for not reading my lecture to him, I unfolded it. Some years ago, three or four, at dinner, in the house of a rich American woman, I found myself placed next to a pretty, vivacious Frenchwoman, whose talk and whose manner of talking reminded me of something I could not call to mind at the moment; and surprised that she could distinguish between my accent in French and our hostess's, I was prompted to ask her if she had ever acted and cared for acting. She answered evasively, and as my question seemed to amuse the company I pursued my neighbour with questions a little longer, without getting a favourable answer; and it was not till some days later I learned that the lady who sat next me at dinner was the celebrated Mademoiselle Richenberg, to whom I wrote an apology, which was very well received, and I did not fail to express my surprise to my friends that they should not have informed me that Madame la Baronne de —— was Mademoiselle Richenberg. Now, I said, turning to the traveller, it has come into my mind that my best chance of learning how to read my lecture will be to go and see Mademoiselle Richenberg, and tell her of my trouble, and if she has a kind heart she will say: you cannot be allowed to go back to London without giving your lecture, I will teach you how to read it. A very excellent idea that is, returned the traveller, and I cannot blame you for availing yourself of it. But could you not spare me half-an-hour? It would take an hour to read my lecture; I'm afraid I cannot, I answered, feeling ashamed of myself for declining to grant the traveller the simple pleasure he was seeking. But the thought was in my mind: he has passed a pleasant morning with me, forgetful for the moment of the sorrow that presses upon him, but will suffer greater pain when I leave him, for were pain continuous it would soon cease to be pain. So in his own interest I must leave him. But why, said I, are you going back to Panama? Can you not find something here? I am a foreigner, he added, in my native land. What could I do here? Good-bye, and thank you for a very pleasant morning, little did I think that I was to pass so pleasant an hour when I went out this morning. Good-bye, sir.

CHAPTER 13.

MESDAMES, MESSIEURES,

Vous êtes venus ici pleins d'indulgence, j'en suis sûr, car vous êtes venus sachant que vous alliez entendre parler un barbare, autrement dit un bredouilleur. Vous souvenez que le mot grec Βαρβαρος peut être traduit en français par le mot bredouilleur, et vous n'attendez pas autre chose de moi qu'un bredouillage français, quoique vous sachiez bien que mes ancêtres parlaient bien la français jadis, au temps de Guillaume le Conquérant et pendant deus cents ans après. Ce n'est qu'au xivème siècle que nous sommes devenus des barbares. Le fait est incontestable. Il a été raconté par Chaucer en ces vers que tout le monde connait chez nous:

And French she spoke both fair and fetishly
It was the French of Stratford atté Bowe
For French of Paris was to her unknowe.

Permettez-moi de traduire:

Elle parlait le français joliment et gentiment
C'était le français de Stratford atté Bowe
Car le français de Paris lui était inconnu.

Ce jargon usité à Stratford atté Bowe dont parlait le père de notre littérature est donc fort ancien; mais, malgré son grand âge, il n'est pas mort; au contraire il est plus répandu que jamais, surtout parmi les gens qui fréquentent les salons de Mayfair. Dès qu'un Parisien entre dans un salon à Londres, chacun cherche à placer ses moindres souvenirs de votre langue, et nos meilleurs romanciers ne peuvent se passer des lieux communs français, croyant alléger ainsi le poids de leurs œuvres. Cet effort atteint son apogée, quand un auteur de chez nous peut écrire quelques vers, ou faire une dédicace en français, et il est vrai que quelques uns de nos auteurs ont hésité entre leur langue maternelle et le jargon. Le premier livre de notre grand écrivain Gibbon fut écrit en français. Swinburne, le grand poète, qui est mort l'année dernière, a publié de la prose et des vers en français. Mais il n'y a rien d'extraordinaire qu'il en soit ainsi, car votre langue fut greffée sur l'Anglo-Saxon au onzième siècle; la pêche greffée sur le prunier produit le brugnon que certains préfèrent à tort aux fruits originaux; vous voyez comment la culture de ma langue s'explique gentîment sans trop d'érudition. Et les livres dont je viens de vous parler et la conférence que vous êtes venus entendre ne sont pas autre chose qu'un retour au passé, les derniers rejetons du vieux tronc français. J'avoue que je ne puis expliquer avec la même aisance le français des écrivains des autres nations, et je cherche encore sans pouvoir le découvir le motif pour lequel Frédéric de Prusse fit venir Voltaire à Berlin pour corriger ses vers, pourquoi le grand Tourguéneff a traduit lui-même plusieurs de ses contes, et pourquoi il y a dans les pays les moins civilisés des gens qui font des vers dans votre langue. Je suis certain que l'on pourrait envoyer en vain des reporters en Sibérie et en Patagonie: les poétes là-bas ne savent pas plus que moi pourquoi ils écrivent en français. Ils sont poussés par un besoin plus fort que la raison, car ils se rendent très bien compte qu'ils ne savent pas votre langue et qu'ils ne la sauront jamais. Tout ce qu'on peut faire est d'apprendre une langue, et la langue que nous apprenons ne nous explique point comme la langue que nous connaissons d'instinct! Elle ne devient jamais tout à fait maternelle; elle reste, si j'ose m'exprimer ainsi, une marâtre—une marâtre pas trop terrible. La preuve en est que je suis venu ici, tenté par l'occasion, de parler français devant un public d'élite. Songez quelle joie pour un barbare, et en même temps quel émoi!

Puisque vous savez maintenant pourquoi je suis ici, il me semble bon de vous dire pourquoi j'ai choisi Balzac et

Shakespeare comme sujet de cette conférence. L'association de ces deux noms peut vous sembler saugrenue, et sans doute plus d'un d'entre vous s'est déjà demandé pourquoi j'ai attelé ensemble un romancier et un poète. Assurément deux romanciers auraient mieux valu: Balzac et Thackeray, Balzac et Dickens, Balzac et Walter Scott. Mais, en réfléchissant bien, vous penserez comme moi j'espère, qu'il est impossible d'associer l'aimable caricaturiste qu'est Dickens, le badaud de Piccadilly qu'est Thackeray, et le collectionneur d'antiquités qu'est Walter Scott, avec le grand penseur qu'est Balzac. Il faudrait un équivalent, et les noms de Hardy, Stevenson et Meredith me sont sont venus. . . . Que faire avec eux? Il n'y en a pas un qui aille à la cheville de Balzac parmi les plus modernes, non plus que parmi les anciens. Alors j'ai renoncé à l'idée d'accepter l'invitation de la *Revue Bleue.* Un moment après, je me suis souvenu que la pensée anglaise se trouve dans la poésie plutôt que dans la prose. Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Byron ont beaucoup pensé, mais ils sont des poètes lyriques qui n'ont rien de commun avec la *Comédie Humaine*, et il me fallait un grand évocateur d'âmes. Alors Shakespeare m'est apparu, et je me suis dit qu'il représente l'Angleterre comme Balzac représente la France. Je n'ai pas eu à chercher plus loin, ma conférence était trouvée.

Le jour où ces deux noms se mirent à tinter dans mes oreilles, je me suis dit que si, par hasard, c'était la destinée de la France d'être engloutie sous les eaux, le mal ne serait pas si grand, si les œuvres de Balzac surnageaient, car nous autres Anglais nous aurions un document dans lequel nous pourrions lire la vie et le génie de nos voisions. Si, au contraire, c'était l'Angleterre qui devait disparaître, et si rien ne restait d'elle que les drames de Shakespeare, vous auriez, vous aussi, un document dans lequel vous pourriez lire notre histoire, et vous auriez un échantillon extraordinaire de notre art, car chaque pays a son art, et l'art de l'Angleterre est las poésie, comme l'art de la Grèce est las sculpture. En disant cela, vous ne ma prendrez pas, j'espère, pour un chauvin littéraire; je tâche d'approacher autant que possible de la vérité, et certes je n'exagère pas en disant que Balzac et Shakespeare ont mis nos deux pays hors du temps et de la catastrophe. Grâce à eux, ils ne seront jamais tout à fait détruits. On y lira et dans le plus bel anglais qui fut jamais écrit, ce qu'était l'Angleterre au moment où elle était elle-même et rien qu'elle-même, et aussi une grande partie de l'histoire de la France, car l'histoire des deux pays a été curieusement entremêlée pendant deux cents ans. Notre Henri II, par son mariage avec Eléonore d'Aquitaine, ajouta énormément à ses possessions françaises: tout l'ouest de la France lui appartenait: la Picardie, la Normandie, la Bretagne, tout, jusqu'aux Basses-Pyrénées. Shakespeare commence ses drames historiques avec Jean. Un messager de Philippe, roi sage et prévoyant, arrive et le but du message est de demander à Jean d'abdiquer en faveur de son neveu Arthur. C'est alors que les guerres entre l'Angleterre et la France, commencent dans les plaines d'Angers. Les Anglais sont victorieux, Arthur est fait prisonnier; mais la victoire ne rapporte rien à l'Angleterre à cause du caractère de Jean, si opiniâtre et si ombrageux que personne—ni ses nobles, ni Shakespeare—ne réussit à le dévider. Aussi, le drame de Shakespeare reste-t-il confus et disparate. Au contraire, avec le caractère vacillant et méditatif de Richard II, Shakespeare fit un très beau drame qui a toujours été reconnu comme une étude préparatoire pour Hamlet. Les évenements y sont purement anglais; mais avec Henri V nous revenons en France, à Agincourt, où le duc d'Orléans fut fait prisonnier. Henri épousa Catherine et devint roi de France. Pendant son règne, la lutte entre les deux nations se corse. Jeanne, la bonne Lorraine, quitte ses brebis pour aller trouver Charles VII. Elle délivre

Orléans et, peu d'années après, les Anglais sont chassés de France. La deuxième et las troisième partie des drames de Henri VI nous reacontent la guerred des Roses: c'est-à-dire la guerre entre York et Lancaster, et ces guerres civiles prirent fin sur le champ de bataille de Bosworth par la mort de Richard III. Shakespeare n'a rien écrit sur le règne d'Henri VII, mais il écrivit un très beau drame sur Henri VIII, comme s'il eût voulu montrer le dernier lien qui existait . . . entre vous et moi. Vous avez failli devenir protestants; seulement Henri de Navarre crut que Paris valait bien une messe, et pour un baiser d'Anne Boleyn, Henri VIII se décida à passer outre.

L'histoire de la France ne se trouve pas d'une façon aussi complète et aussi déterminée dans l'œuvre de Balzac Le romancier a toujours été obsédé par son époque, mais tout de même il l'a quittée pour écrire sa belle étude sur Catherine de Médicis; las lutte entre votre religion et la mienne l'a tenté, et la grande et subtile Florentine qui passait, avec les éclairs cruels de la Renaissance dans ses yeux, et l'énergie de son époque dans sa démarche. Il n'y a rien peut-être de plus poignant dans la *Comédie humaine* que la scène où Catherine se trouve en face de l'homme qui est mis à la torture. On demands à la reine s'il faut faire encore tourner la roue, et, sachant que la victime a la force de résister à la souffrance, elle répond: Oui, encore un tour, ce n'est qu'un hérétique. La scène autour du dauphin mourant est aussi belle. Souvent je me suis demandé pourquoi un auteur dramatique ne l'a pas utilisée. Peut-être faudrait-il Shakespeare pour la mettre en scène. Je voudrais la citer; et le portrait de Calvin, un des plus extraordinaires qui existe sur papier imprimé, ou toile peinte, évoque en moi le souvenir des plus beaux portraits de l'école française—le portrait de M. Bertin qui est au Louvre peint par Ingres, et les portraits de David et de Prudhon. Car, malgré le romantisme de l'époque de 1830, son œuvre n'a rien perdu de son caractère essentiellement français, même traditionnel, tenant bien plus au classique qu'on ne let croit généralement. La forme de Corneille, Molière et Racine est differente, on peut dire tout juste l'opposé; mais lorsque l'on va au fond des idées, on voit que Balzac n'est pas moins français, qu'eux. Autant qu'eux il reste—puis-je dire?—un urbain, se servant de la nature seulement pour y mettre des scènes d'amour et de galanterie et ne se souciant que très peu de la beauté des arbres, ne sachant probablement pas distinguer un bouleau d'un mélèze, et passant, je suis sur, près d'une primevère au bord de l'eau sans même la regarder. L'horizon bleuâtre l'ennuie, et il détourne les yeux pour chercher une bille, ne s'intéressant qu'aux hommes et aux villes qu'ils bâtissent. Je me souviens dans *Ferragus* de plusieurs pages sur les rues de Paris; la rue de la Paix il l'admire, mais, pour certaines raisons, il ne peut lui accorder toute son admiration; la rue du Faubourg Montmartre commence bien, mais elle finit en queue de poisson; la Place de la Bourse au clair de lune est un rêve de l'ancienne Grèce. Dans *Catherine de Médicis* il lui a fallu toute la ville et il nous raconte les changements qui se sont produits dans Paris depuis le xvi^e^ siècle avec tous les détails, comment une rue qui allait à droite et à gauche ne se trouve plus sur la carte, etc., etc.

S'il n'avait pas été merveilleux romancier, il aurait été architecte ou historien. Laissnons de côté l'architecte et occupons-nous de l'historien. Dans ce livre Catherine et les personnes qui l'entourent sont aussi vivantes que celles qui se meuvent dans la *Comédie humaine.* Il a obtenu cette intensité de vie en employant le dialogue. Je sias que cette manière de traiter l'histoire n'est pas très scientifique; elle est regardée de travers aujourd'hui; mais je crois tout de même que tous ceux qui ne sont pas des historiens de profession trouveront leur plaisir dans

Catherine de Médicis; l'histoire vivante, même si elle est fausse, vaut mieux que l'histoire morte, même si elle est vraie. Et en fermant le livre ils regretteront que ce soit son aseul essai historique. L'historien était toujours latent sous le romancier; dans tous ses récits il y a une préoccupation historique. Au milieu de son roman *Un Ménage de Garçons*, il s'arrête pour décrire un village tel qu'il a existé au xvi^e siècle, sous prétexte que c'est là que son héroïne a vu le jour, ou pour tout autre prétexte aussi frivole. Un autre exemple flagrant se trouve dans *Les Paysans*. Voulant décrire le parc et le château, il commence par les sept portes, car il y a sept portes à ce parc, et il assure le lecteur que pour comprendre le roman il est nécessaire que les sept portes soient décrites.

Son but dans ce roman était de prouver que la loi était insuffisante pour sauvegarder les intérêts des propriétaires contre une combinaison, de paysans; et, avec une clairvoyance extraordinaire, il prévue tous les événements qui sont arrivés en Irlande depuis vingt-cinq ans. La victoire des fermiers à la fin du roman n'est que le tableau exact de ce qui se passe en Irlande aujourd'hui.

Dans *les Chouans* Balzac a raconté les misères et l'héroïsme des paysans qui n'ont pas voulu accepter la République, et, pour le plaisir de décrire la retraite de Russie, il a composé le conte qui porte le nom *Adieu*. Vous vous souvenez de ces descriptions du passage de la Bérésina. C'est là où la pauvre femme dit adieu à son mari. Adieu est le seul mot dont elle se souvient dans sa folie. Ce conte prouve que Balzac a su s'intéresser aux grands évémements historiques, mais son époque l'obsédait. Il se peut qu'on écrive de meilleurs romans sur le présent que sur le passé; il se peut, aussi, que le passé fournisse de meilleurs sujets pour le théâtre. En tous cas Shakespeare a bâti son théâtre dans le passé, mais étant un artiste de la Renaissance il ne craignait pas d'introduire les mœurs de son époque dans les drames historiques. Lisez la première partie de Henri IV et vous y trouverez la vie des tavernes de Eastcheap racontée avec le même naturalisme que Balzac a mis à raconter le quartier Latin dans *les Illusions perdues.* Nous nous souvenons du petit cabaret où Lucien fit la connaissance de Lousteau, lorsque nous parlons de la taverne où Falstaff dispute ses comptes aves Mistress Quickly. Des souvenirs de Doll Tearsheet et les soudards de Fleet Street se mêlent avec nos souveniers de Coralie et de Florine et des journalistes des boulevards. Les deux actrices sont esquissées avec une main légère comme celle de Shakespeare, lorsqu'il jetait sur le papier quelques traits féminins. L'amour de Coralie s'exhale de sa bouche comme le parfum d'une fleur, et sur le coin de sa table Lucien écrit un article tellement joli, que personne n'aurait pu l'écrire sauf Balzac. Qui aurait pu faire parler les journalistes pendant le grand souper, excepté Shakespeare et l'homme qui les a fait parler? Les pages succèdent aux pages, l'esprit de Balzac nous entraîne comme une mer profonde: des aphorismes clapotent autour de nous comme des lames; nous subissons le sentiment de l'infini; et le seul juste reproche qu'on puisse faire à ce souper est qu'il n'y a pas un seul convive qui symbolise la Rive gauche comme Falstaff la Tête du Sanglier en Eastcheap. Je crois que nous avons tous rencontré sur le boulevard des journalistes qui ont plus d'allure que Lousteau, et qui incarnent une humanité plus riche. Mais si Balzac a échoué avec Lousteau, il a pleinement réussi avec Lucien. J'ose dire que j'aime mieux le Roméo de la comédie que celui de la tragédie. Lucien est bien moins abstrait, et Balzac a trouvé la phrase qui résume les ambitions d'un jeune homme, lorsque Lucien répond à Vautrin: Je voudrais être célèbre et aimé.

En poursuivant les analogies qui lient ensemble ces deux maîtres de la pensée humaine, il faut oublier les petits traits qui sont sans importance, pour regarder en face ce qu'ils ont d'essential en commun. Ils sont tous deux pour nous les plus grands évocateurs d'âmes qui aient jamais existé. Sous ce rapport, on ne trouverait pas leur égal en Allemagne, en Espagne, en Italie, et si l'on retournait vers l'ancienne Grèce, on trouverait un goût plus parfait, mais non l'abondance de Balzac et de Shakespeare. Ils sont abondants comme la vie même Rappelons-nous d'abord les créations du poète, seulement les noms qui viennent à l'esprit de tout le monde dès qu'on parle de Shakespeare: Hamlet, Othello, Lear, Antoine, Brutus, Cassius, Falstaff et les Richard II et III. Et sans songer aux personnages des comédies qui ne sont nécessairement que des aspects extérieurs: Benedict, Petrucchio, Malvolio, etc., prononçons les noms qui représentent le mieux la *Comédie humaine*: Le Père Goriot, le Baron Hulot, Philippe Rubempré, César Birotteau, le curé de Tours—qui encore? Eugénie Grandet. Je m'arrête, l'éprueve est injuste pour Balzac. Son talent ne se résume pas entièrement dans ses caractères; ses descriptions, ses commentaires philosophiques comptent pour beaucoup dans son œuvre. Pour comprendre l'énormité du Tourangeau, il faut connaître les 50 volumes qu'il a écrits de sa propre main en une vingtaine d'années. Quoique très grands, ses personnages n'ont pas l'éternelle allure de Lear, d'Othello, de Macbeth et d'Hamlet, ni de Don Quichotte ni de Sancho. Balzac n'avait pas le sentiment de l'héroïque. Mais Shakespeare l'avait, et c'est justement ce sentiment de l'héroïque qui l'a suavé bien des fois du naufrage, par exemple dans le *Roi Lear* que Swinburne, le grand poète anglais, préfère à *Hamlet.* Les poètes comme les dieux ne donnent pas leurs raisons, mais les romanciers en donnent et l'année dernière, Tolstoï, debout sur un rocher de la steppe, a déclaré avec la véhémence d'un Jérémie que ce qui manque à la tragédie, c'est le bon sens. Si le bon sens a jamais manqué à quelqu'un, je ne saurais dire s'il a le plus manqué à Jérémie ou à Tolstoï.

Emporté par la folie de la haine, Tolstoï a pris à partie la poésie, la musique, l'art tout entier, la vie elle-même. J'aime mieux la folie de l'amour, quoiqu'elle ait poussé Swinburne à mettre des fleurs à la boutonnière de tous les petits poètes du temps d'Elisabeth, et malgré qu'elle l'ait incité, dans un dernier délire, à tresser une telle couronne de lauriers pour le roi Lear, que le pauve vieux n'en peut plus relever la tête. Il faut lire ce livre de louanges et d'imprécations. . . . Enfin, il trouve un petit défaut, la disparition du fou, le compagnon du roi Lear jusqu'à la fin du troisième acte, et il dit qu'aucune conjecture audacieuse ou subtile ne peut l'expliquer. Je la regrette autant que lui; le fou est certainement l'être le plus raisonnable de la tragédie, et après sa disparition la tragédie n'est rien qu'orage, désespoir, terreur, délire; des scènes de cruauté se suivent les unes après les autres. La pièce est comme un navire qui, portant trop de voiles, est toujours prêt à chavirer. Le gouvernail est brisé, les mâts tombent, personne n'est debout, sauf le viellard qui continue ses lamentations jusqu'à la fin et qui meurt avec sa fille morte dans ses bras.

La disparition du fou n'est pas la seule chose étrange dans cette pièce; tout y est inexplicable, même le génie de Shakespeare, si l'on n'admet pas que la pièce n'est qu'un brouillon qui n'a pas été assez travaillé. En tous cas on ne prend plaisir à sa lecture que lorsque Lear déclame, ou que le fou nous entretient avec sa grande sagesse. Le rôle d'Edmond est fait d'une hypocrisie assez plate; Edgar, son, frère, est incompréhensible. On devine dans son rôle une idée que l'auteur a cherchée sans la trouver. L'action flotte entre une époque très lointaine et le Moyen-Age. Les trois filles de Lear sont à peine plus indiquées que les trois sœurs dans le conte de Cendrillon. Je raconte la pièce telle qu'elle apparaît à la lecture, mais elle acquiert une grandeur surnaturelle lorsqu'on la voit représentée.—Il faut *voir* Shakespeare! La parade lui est nécessaire, et surtout il faut l'entendre, car il s'adresse bien plus à l'ouïe qu'à l'œil.

Le *Roi Lear* est la plus belle esquisse qu'un poète ait jamais laissée, mais il ne faut pas oublier qu'en littérature l'esquisse ne vaut pas l'œuvre achevée. J'ai choisi Lear plutôt que Hamlet, Othello, et j'en ai parlé en détail pour une raison que vous avec déjà devinée. Vous savez que prendre le sujet d'autrui, c'est le droit de tout grand artiste. Rubens l'a fait quand il a apporté d'Italie la composition de *La Descente de croix.* La tâche de Balzac a été plus difficile que celle de Rubens; le grand Flamand a honoré un peintre quelconque en lui prenant son bien, tandis que Balzac est entré en lutte avec le plus grand poète du monde et il en est sorti triomphant avec un chef-d'œuvre à la hauteur de l'original. Il est vraiment à l'honneur de la France qu'un Français ait pu refaire le *Roi Lear* de fond en comble et avec la même aisant dont la nature elle-même transforme les choses. Ayant un jour rencontré le Roi Lear dans la lande désolée, l'idée est venue à Balzac de le prendre par la main, de l'habiller à la mode de Louis-Philippe et de le conduire dans la maison Vauquer, et là il en a fait un bourgeois silencieux et timide au milieu d'un petit monde déchu,—le détritus de la grande ville. Et il a pu faire ce changement sans que le sujet perdît rien de ce qu'il avait d'essentiel. Maintenant le père qui se sacrifie pour ses filles et qui est ensuite abandonné par elles, parle en prose; quand il parle, ses paroles sont aussi rares que les paroles du roi étaient abondantes, mais les petites phrases débitées par lui nous révèlent une humanité que les vers avaient été incapables d'exprimer. Il est impossible, je crois, de lire la mort du père Goriot sans comprendre qu'elle est aussi réelle que la mort de Lear; seulement elle est moins hautaine. Nous sommes loin de la tragédie cyclopéenne où les vers tonnent et luisent, mais il y a ceci de commun entre les deux morts que la dernière est aussi indemne que la première de toute sentimentalité; la joie que nous éprouvons en lisant le roman aussi bien qu'en lisant la tragédie est une joie d'art, une joie qui ne fait pas couler de larmes. Il n'y a pas une larme dans Shakespeare et je ne me souviens d'aucune en Balzac.

La table d'hôte de M^{me} Vauquer est d'une admirable vérité et je ne crois pas qu'il y ait dans l'œuvre de Balzac une plus belle page. Mais puisque Swinburne a trouvé un défaut dans le *Roi Lear*, il faut bien que j'en trouvé un dans le *Père Goriot*. Il a regretté l'absence du fou; moi, je regrette la présence de Vautrin. Les discours sur la société moderne qu'il tient avec Rastignac me semblent aussi insipides que les pires pages de la tragédie, et on n'est pas critique pour un sou, si l'on ne remarque que les filles de Goriot sont à peine plus indiquées que celles de Lear. Si elles nous semblent plus réelles, c'est que nous les voyons dans les salons et que nous les savons amoureuses de jeunes gens qui leur empruntent de l'argent et qui portent des souliers vernis. Mais il ne faut pas se laisser duper par les dehors: à vrai dire il n'y a guère plus d'humanité dans Anastasie de Restaud et Delphine de Nucingen que dans Goneril, Regan et Cordelia, un peu plus, parce qu'elles sont nées deux cents ans plus tard, dans un siècle où la femme avait acquis une certaine position et une certaine autorité.

Je n'ai pas la prétention d'avoir fouillé la littérature de la Renaissance à fond, mais on se rend très bien compte de ce qu'il y a dans une littérature sans l'avoir lue d'un bout à l'autre. On devine le caractère d'une littérature comme on devine le caractère de l'homme qui vous parle: à première vue on sait son âge, sa race, à quelle classe il appartient et cinq minutes après de quoi il est capable et un grand nombre de ses idées. Il en est de même avec une littérature. Après avoir lu deux sonnets de Pétrarque on sait que Laure n'était pour lui qu'ine exhortation littéraire; on ouvre la *Divine Comédie* à la page où Dante entrevoit Béatrice dans les cieux et on sait tout de suite qu'il va faire d'elle une séraphique théolgienne. Et Boccace? Sans lire une seule ligne de lui, on sait qu'il n'a jamais songé à autre chose qu'à la jolie chair de ses maîtresses et au bon fricot qu'il pouvait cuisiner. Il est inutile que je passe en Espagne pour vous parler de Dulcinée, la bonne amie de Don Quichotte: vous savez très bien que Cervantes se servait d'elle pour en faire la parodie des grandes amours du moyen âge. Je pourrais vous conduire en France pour vous parler de Rabelais et de Montaigne; et puis vous amener en Angleterre pour vous lire les contes de Chaucer: mais il faudrait beaucoup de temps pour toutes ces lectures; et il sera plus simple de vous inviter à venir avec moi au Louvre; il ne faut pas autant de temps pour voir des tableaux que pour lire des livres; ils vous renseignent sur les idées qui ont prévalu à leur époque et on peut dire en toute sécurité qu'aucun art n'est moins indiscret qu'un autre. Ce qui n'est pas dans la peinture n'est pas dans l'âme du peintre. Celles de Botticelli et de Mantegna nous apprennent qu'ils out beaucoup réfléchi sur les draperies flottantes et qu'ils ont trouvé comment on peut tirer parti du corps de la femme dans les panneaux décoratifs.

A leur époque Pompéi était encore ensevelie, mais l'esprit de l'antiquité qui couvait sous les cendres leur a fait entrevoir de très beaux plis qu'ils n'auraient jamais pu dessiner, s'ils s'étaient apitoyés sur le sort humain et s'ils s'étaient inquiétés des souffrances et des mélancolies féminines. Je ne crois pas que vous trouviez dans les yeux des madones que Botticelli peignait pour ses patrons les ecclésiastiques plus de douleur que dans les yeux des femmes qui dansaient en chlamydes autour des vases grecs. Dans les femmes de Michel-Ange y a-t-il seulement un sexe? Le sexe de la femme lui répugnait et il a fait d'elle un être mixte, viril et musclé. L'histoire nous apprend que Raphaël a beaucoup aimé sa maîtresse la Fornarina et ses tableaux prouvent qu'il n'a dû être parfaitement heureux que lorsqu'il se trouvait seul avec elle dans son atelier, cherchant une attitude plus noble, plus douce que toutes celles qu'elle avait déjà prises et qui lui avaient inspiré pourtant des chefs-d'œuvre. Il dut être content, quand elle donna ce beau mouvement de bras avec lequel elle attire un enfant vers un autre dans *La Belle Jardinière*, ou quand, avec un mouvement de bras aussi beau, elle soulève le voile qui couvre le nouveau-né. Phidias aurait compris Raphaël. Leur point de vue est le même. Ils n'ont cherché que la beauté pure. Titien a laissé voir toute son âme sensuelle dans la belle exaltation du mouvement de la femme nue assise au bord du puits; elle semble adresser la parole à une femme richement habillée qui ne l'écoute pas; un pâle chevalier chevauche dans le fond ombreux; et vous vous souvenez aussi de l'autre tableau où un corps de femme, alourdi par la chaleur d'un après-midi roux et silencieux, se traîne à la fontaine pour y puiser de l'eau, et comment le murmure de l'eau entrant dans la jarre se mèle au chant du guitariste. Celle-ci toutes les femmes de Titien nous apprennent que le peintre n'a pas cherché autre chose en elles que des créatures de plaisir qui n'ont jamais pensé ni rêvé. Il ne pouvait oublier l'odalisque, même quand il peignait sa fille; vous vous souvenez comment elle s'en va les yeux regardant en arrière. Si aucun portrait d'homme n'existait de sa main, on dirait que Titien, de tous les peintres, était le moins psychologue. Mais nous avons des portraits de lui qui racontent la vie entière des princes, des sénateurs et des nobles jeunes gens.

Léonard da Vinci a versé une mysticité païenne qui lui est personnelle dans les yeux de tous ses modèles.

Rubens a fait couler quelques larmes conventionnelles sur les joues de ses madones, mais ses belles Flamandes sont encore plus dépourvues de mentalité que les Italiennes dont nous venons de parler. Ni Isabelle Brandt ni Hélène Fourment ne lui ont inspiré une pensée intime; elles ne furent pour lui que des fleurs vivantes et il peignait leurs portraits exactement comme il aurait peint des pivoines et des coquelicots. Van Dyck et Jordaens ne se souciaient pas davantage de ce qui nous intéresse tant: l'âme féminine. Vous pouvez scruter tous les tableaux, feuilleter tous les livres de la Renaissance, vous n'en trouverez aucune trace; pas plus dans Shakespeare que parmi les autres: voilà où je voulais en venir.

Je sais que les femmes de Shakespeare ont été louées par des critiques éminents et, parmi la foule des admirateurs, se trouve Taine, un critique très subtil, qui voyait clair, mais qui pourtant ne s'est jamais demandé d'une façon décisive, si Shakespeare décrivait mieux les hommes que les femmes, ou le contraire, ni s'il décrivait les princes et les aristocrates mieux que les gens du peuple. A l'entendre, on dirait que Shakespeare était un auteur sans parti-pris qui faisait tout également bien. Cet exemple d'impartialité a été suivi par d'autres critiques moins éminents et moins subtils qui se contentent de crier: Tout est beau, tout est sublime dans cet auteur sans pareil. Tous les six mois, un nouveau livre paraît sur Shakespeare, aussi vide et déclamatoire que le livre précédent; on n'y trouve jamais un effort de la part de l'auteur pour comprendre; il semble suffisant d'élever la voix et de ne sortir jamais de la louange banale; on évite, autant que possible, d'indiquer ses préférences, si l'on en a; tout est beau, tout est sublime; nous sommes étourdis par la veste clameur de cette adoration. On dirait une réunion de nègres méthodistes dans une chapelle; chacun s'époumonne à crier plus fort que son voisin, afin d'attirer l'attention du bon Dieu. Peut-être les critiques croient-ils que Shakespeare les entend? En tous cas, la folie s'accroit chaque jour, et je ne serais pas étonné, si le culte de Iahveh venait à chanceler en Angleterre, qu'on se hâtât de mettre Shakespeare à sa place au haut des cieux. Dans le tumulte de ces voix on entend la voix de Swinburne au-dessus de toutes les autres; du fond de sa tombe il crie: Tout ce qu'on peut savoir de la vie de l'homme, de la vie de la femme et de la vie de l'enfant, Shakespeare le savait mieux que tout homme qui soit jamais né. Et cette phrase, que je viens de citer, doit vous faire comprendre où nous ens ommes; Shakespeare a très peu parlé d'enfants; impossible d'en parler aussi peu, à moins de ne pas en parler du tout. Néanmoins Swinburne n'hésite pas à dire que Shakespeare les connaît mieux que tout homme qui soit jamais né. Le malheur est que des éloges si factices et si exagérés empêchent toute vraie appréciation du poète. On perd la tête et les traits les plus caractéristiques de son génie passent inaperçus. On lit Shakespeare aujourd'hui comme les prophètes ont été lus autrefois, avec une arrière-pensée: il s'agit de prouver que c'est le comédian et non pas Lord Bacon qui est l'auteur des drames; ou bien il s'agit de faire des livres qui conduiront leurs auteurs aux chaires bien payées de l'Université, ou bien il y a des raisons patriotiques.

L'Angleterre a produit Shakespeare, Shakespeare a décrit l'Angleterre. Donc, il faut louer Shakespeare dès qu'on parle de littérature, et puis il faut faire des livres sur Shakespeare, pour prouver qu'on a lu le poète. Il y a un proverbe français qui dit que les arbres nous empêchent de voir la forêt; eh bien! en Angleterre, ce sont les professeurs qui nous empêchent de voir Shakespeare. Et tous les jours l'ombre devient plus complète. Que faire? Rien. On ne peut empêcher ces messieurs d'écrire ou de parler, et, si on le pouvait, on ne le voudrait pas, car ce sont des hommes excellents qui travaillent de leur mieux, et je suis sûr que chacun d'eux croit qu'il contribue . . . je ne sais à quoi il contribue, mais c'est déjà bien, de croire qu'on contribue à quelque chose. Leur patience est admirable; il parait qu'ils passent dix-huit heures par jour à lire les œuvres du grand maitre, faisant toute espèce de calculs, comptant les mots, les lettres, les majuscules, les virgules, tout. Ils ont fait des livres sur les plantes, les fruits, les fleurs et les animaux dont parlent Shakespeare. Ils ont appris tout ce qu'on peut apprendre, mais il paraît qu'il y a bien des gens qui apprennent sans comprendre; c'est le cas de nos professeurs. Tout de même, je me demande comment, en ferment le folio, après leurs dix-huit heures de lecture, l'idée ne leur est jamais venue que le poète n'a fait autre chose que peindre une série de portraits d'hommes en pied, les plùs parfaits qui aient jamais été réalisés, et esquisser seulement quelques silhouettes de femmes, de ci, de là, en bas, dans les coins, ces silhouettes vraiment délicieuses qui se nomment Ophélie, Desdemone, Cordelie. Même le fait que les rôles de femme étaient joués, au temps de Shakespeare, par de jeunes garçons n'a pas révélé à messieurs les professeurs, que Shakespeare n'écrivit que les rôles qui pouvaient être distribués, et c'est, en effet, cet qu'il a fait. Il y a peu de rôles dans son œuvre qui demandent le corps et la grâce de la femme. Un jeune homme comprendrait bien l'esprit changeant de Béatrice et il pourrait le représenter.

En créant Lady Macbeth, Shakespeare a évité, on peut dire avec soin, de démontrer la domination qu'elle avait sur son mari. Messieurs les professeurs me diront que la puissance qu'elle exerçait est exclusivement intellectuelle. Oui, mais pourquoi? Parce que Shakespeare savait que le rôle serait joué par un jeune homme. Catherine, dans *La Mégère apprivoisée*, pourrait très bien être jouée de même; le rôle est si simple: une femme qui rage. Portia ne nous intéresse que lorsqu'elle se déguise en avocat de la cour. Dans *La nuit des Rois*. Shakespeare cherche encore une fois à fuir la femme. Viola se déguise en garçon pour être auprès du duc qu'elle aimé, et de nos jours, le rôle a été joué par un jeune homme. La peinture et la musique ont tellement insisté sur la féminité de Juliette, que je n'ose en parler, mais tout de même, si l'on s'adresse au texte, on y voit que Shakespeare n'a jamais cherché à mettre une différence entre l'amour de Roméo pour Juliette et l'amour de Juliette pour Roméo. La personnalité de Desdémone est encore plus vague; une petite obéissance, pas davantage; néanmoins, un professeur éminent lui a consacré plusieurs pages d'un livre intitulé *Les Femmes de Shakespeare*, et il poursuit ce joli fantôme—peut-être l'un des plus jolis de la littérature—et d'autres jolis fantômes à peine moins jolis, en les parant de subtilités qu'ils n'ont pas et dont leur créateur ne voudrait pas. Pauvre professeur! Il n'a jamais compris que, si Shakespeare avait approfondi ses personnages féminins, son œuvre serait moins parfaite, qu'une œuvre d'art ne peut-être toute en cîmes, qu'il faut des plaines et des vallées. De tous les livres sur Shakespeare c'est celui peut-être que je regrette le plus, car, pour pénétrer dans l'esprit du poète et de son époque, on doit se rendre compte que, pour des raisons à la fois historiques et pratiques, et peut-être aussi affaire de tempérament, les femmes de Shakespeare sont d'un intérêt tout à fait secondaire. Mais violà! admettre cela, ce serait admettre que l'art de Shakespeare ne fut pas l'art complet, l'art suprême. Il y a des gens à qui Phidias et Michel-Ange ne suffisent pas; ils voudraient—je crois qu'ille appellent cela idéaliser—n'en faire qu'un avec les deux. Le produit serait un monstre dont nous nous détournerions avec horreur; et je me détournerais avec horreur de ce Shakespeare que la critique anglaise a crée durant ces vingt-cinq dernières années; je voudrais sauver Shakespeare de l'empyrée nais où l'on prétend l'installer. Il est si intéressant comme Anglais ayant vécu à la fin du xvi^{e} siècle, que c'est une pitié de le hisser dans la solitude de ces hauteurs. L'homme a assez de génie pour que ses admirateurs n'aient pas besoin d'en faire un dieu sachant tout le passé et jetant un regard perçant dans l'avenir, devinant même l'âme féminine, qui ne fait son apparition dans l'art que cinquante ans plus tard, au milieu du xvii^{e} siècle, et non pas dans la littérature, mais dans la peinture.

Selon moi, c'est Rembrandt qui fut le premier à concevoir que la femme avait une existence personnelle, qu'aussi bien que l'homme elle pensait, rêvait, se demandait si la vie était un grand malheur que seulement la mort pourrait apaiser, ou bien une promenade délicieuse dont il fallait remercier le Seigneur, comme Renan l'a enseigné. On voit la femme pour la première fois dans les tableaux de Rembrandt. Celle qui se fait laver les pieds au Louvre, je ne me rappelle plus le nom du tableau, en est un exemple. Cette femme est triste comme une femme peut-être triste. Le portrait de la femme de Rembrandt dans la Salle Carrée est un exemple encore plus frappant. Mon Dieu! comme on lit son âme dans ses yeux! Elle se rend compte de sa faiblesse et de sa dépendance; et d'une façon presque inconsciente, elle songe qu'elle n'est que le satellite d'un homme de génie. Si Rembrandt revenait au monde (on ne fait heureusement pas revenir les morts pour si peu de chose, je conçois); mais si, pour des raisons sérieuses, il revenait et qu'on lui montrât les lignes que je viens dé'crire, je crois savoir ce qu'il dirait: Eh bien! il est possible que le monsieur ait raison, mais je n'y ai pas pensé. Si Rembrandt y avait pensé, il n'aurait pas entrevu l'âme féminine avec une telle clairvoyance. Il l'a peinte inconsciemment et il est probable que pas plus que lui, nul de ses contemporains n'a vu ce qui flottait sur les toiles. Il ne faut pas oublier que ce que nous appelons la vérité n'existe pas dans les choses, mais dans les yeux qui les regardent. Tout ce qui est femme, nous le voyons mieux qu'on ne le voyait il y a 250 ans. Cependant, il est rare qu'un homme ait une vision sans qu'un autre ne l'ait aussi, et il paraît qu'à l'époque où Rembrandt peignait, quelques années plus tard, un Français a entendu l'âme féminine comme le murmure d'une eau douce. Racine, paraît-il, a non seulement conçu de grands rôles de femme, mais il y a versé toute l'intimité de la femme jusqu'aux secrets les plus profonds de son cœur. Je dis paraît-il, parce que des amis me l'ont dit et je m'en fie à leur jugement. Il n'y a pas moyen de faire autrement, car la lecture ne m'apprend rien, pas plus que la représentation. C'est avec regret que je confesse que la littérature de ce que vous appelez votre Grand Siècle m'est complètement fermée, surtout les tragédies de Racine et de Corneille. Je dis que je le regrette, car l'absence dun sens est toujours regrettable. Mais, comme le malheur ne porte que sur moi, on ne me demandera pas de répandre des cendres sur ma tête, de déchirer mes vêtements. Il serait tout à fait suffisant, pour arriver à une entente cordiale, que je dise que l'hémistiche et la rime empéchent la psychologie des personnages de venir jusqu'à moi. Le vers rimé me semble délicieux, pourvu que le sujet soit léger et fantaisiste. Mais je m'aperçois que je rentre dans la voie des explications, et je m'arrête. En tous cas, les femmes de Racine étaient toutes des princesses, des femmes nobles, éloignées des tristesses humbles et quotidiennes, et vivant dans l'émotion abstraite et, quand je pense à la femme, c'est à l'être qui reste au logis, triste et résignée, comme Eugénie Grandet, qui, une fois dans sa vie, a eu un amour: je ne me rappelle plus pour le moment quelles circonstances lui ont fait perdre son bonheur; je me souviens d'elle comme d'une créature échouée. Rembrandt a bien deviné la mélancolie de la femme qui n'est pas aimée, qui est seule dans la vie;

et Balzac, puisqu'il a tout deviné, l'a devinée aussi. L'odalisque existe encore dans notre littérature, mais dans la mauvaise; nous la voyons aussi au Salon, mais toujours dans la mauvaise peinture, et, je crois que vous êtes de mon avis: lorsque nous avons fait quelque chose d'un peu mieux que d'habitude, c'est à Eugénie Grandet que nous songeons. Elle est la seule femme qui se trouve parmi les personnages qui viennent à l'esprit, quand on pense à la *Comédie Humaine.* Il y en a d'autres, mais je ne me souviens pas du nom de la vieille fille, ni de la charmante créature dans *Les Parents Pauvres*; ce dernier oubli est impardonnable: ce nom est-il Peirrette? Qu-importe? Il n'y a pas beaucoup plus de femmes en Balzac qu'en Shakespeare et Balzac est le dernier écrivain qui s'intéressait suffisamment à l'éternel masculin pour en faire le fond de son œuvre. Depuis, l'éternel féminin est partout, absorbant les arts et les métiers, cherchant maintenant à s'emparer de la politique et gagnant la couronne du martyre, c'est-à-dire un, deux, ou trois mois de prison, comme les journaux d'octobre dernier nous l'ont appris.

La foi de Shakespeare et de Balzac dans l'éternel masculin relie le grand génie de votre pays à celui du mien. Il y a d'autres liens encore. Shakespeare a compris, comme Balzac, qu'un écrivain trouve son affaire dans le monde des humbles plutôt que dans le haute, parmi les déclassés de toutes sortes, les soudards, les chemineaux, les souteneurs, les filles de joie et leurs patronnes.

Cela me fait de la peine d'être du même avis que Tolstoï; pourtant je le suis, quand il dit que Falstaff est ce qu'il y a de plus universal et de plus original dans l'œuvre de Shakespeare; mais pas du tout quand il dit que Falstaff est le seul caractère dans l'œuvre de Shakespeare, parlant toujours une langue qui lui soit propre et dont les actions et les paroles soient en accord. Cette critique est

Tolstoï tout entier; l'idée fausse bien déguisée; car, sans contredit Hamlet est la pensée secrète de tous les hommes, de Tolstoï peut-être plus souvent que de tous les autres. Aussitôt que l'intelligence se révèle dans une homme, il est prêt à se croire Hamlet. Hamlet est l'hiéroglyphe et le symbole de l'intelligence; Falstaff est le symbole et l'arabesque de la chair. Mais la chair de Falstaff est pénétrée de l'intelligence d'Hamlet. La chair de Falstaff jase, et sa jaserie est douce et gentille, comme celle des oiseaux qui se réveillent le matin; elle est à moitié consciente, car Falstaff aime son gros ventre, sachant que c'est son ventre qui le relie avec le monde en dessous et audessus de lui. Son ventre le rend un peu panthéiste, car le ventre est ce que nous avons tous en commun; le ventre est la base de l'existence chez les animaux aussi bien que chez les hommes. Les oiseaux ont des ailes, les poissons ont des nageoires: mais tout ce qui vit a un ventre; donc Falstaff, qui est ventre, et rien que ventre, est l'image de l'existence terrestre. Les anciens avaient Sïlène, mais Sïlène ne parlait pas, tandis que Falstaff parle avec abondance; et Shakespeare a cu soin que son langage fût aussi matérialiste que l'organe qu'il représente si bien. Il y avait grand danger qu'il devint un symbole vide, mais le génie de Shakespeare a sauvegardé sa personnalité jusqu'à sa mort. La muse lyrique de Shakespeare, qui se cachait de Falstaff, est sortie au moment où le gros homme allait mourir et elle a mis dans sa bouche de nobles phrases. Mais tout de même, jusqu'au dernier soupir, Falstaff, est resté Falstaff. Hamlet est le centre d'une pièce; Falstaff se montre dans plusieurs; le perdre serait un malheur qui ne pourrait jamais être réparé, et s'il fallait choisir entre les deux, hésiter, même si l'hésitation ne durait qu'un moment, serait impardonnable.

Après avoir chanté les cimes et les forêts Wagner a composé *Les Maîtres Chanteurs,* parce qu'il fallait chanter aussi le foyer. Il me semble que Shakespeare a dû éprouver le besoin de décrire l'intelligence après avoir décrit cette matérialisté. Mon Dieu, comme il a fallu être poète pour décrire cette masse de chair falote! Dans les scènes comiques et extravagantes on ne peut se passer du poète une minute; il faut qu'il soit là à chaque mot et il faut qu'on soit Shakespeare ou Aristophane, quand le langage est grossier. Il a fallu plus de génie pour écrire la scène fossoyeurs dans *Hamlet,* que le célèbre monologue être ou ne pas être. Jamais Shakespeare ne fut si grand poète, que lorsqu'il peignît des personnages comiques, tel que Touchstone, le pitre qui a suivi les amoureux dans la forêt d'Arden. Je ne sais si un peu du charme de la scène entre Touchstone et les bergers transpire dans la traduction française. Je l'espère, mais je ne souviens pas d'un seul poète capable de la faire passer dans la langue française, sauf Banville peut-être. Le caprice de cette scène aurait captivé l'esprit si capricieux de votre poète, et le mariage du bouffon avec l'affreuse paysanne Audrey l'aurait ravi. Touchstone se rend complètement compte combien Audrey est rebutante et sotte, mais cela va à son humeur ironique de l'épouser. Après avoir épuisé l'ironie dans les paroles il la cherche maintenant dans la vie réelle, et la pauvre folle le suit charmée par la musique de ses grelots. On se souvient de *La Douzième Nuit* où Malvolio le fat, pur faire plaisir aux femmes, endosse des déguisements ridicules, et où les trois bonshommes—Sir Toby Belch, Sir Andrew Auguecheek et le clown—se posent des questions. Dans ces comédies, nous sommes à peine sortis du folk-lore, et Banville aurait dû les traduire car, seul parmi vous, il savait mettre la logique à la porte. La *Mégère apprivoisée* se passe dans la même atmosphère de rêve; il aurait respire à pleins poumons; et dans les *Joyeuses Commères de Windsor* (comme cela fait plaisir d'écrire ces beaux titres), le délicieux poète aurait rencontré Falstaff chez Mistress Ford, et il est facile d'imaginer la joie qu'il aurait éprouvée à lui serrer la main.

Vous me direz que rien de tout cela ne se trouve dans Balzac. Je ne suis pas de votre avis; il y a plus d'invention et de fantaisie dans la *Comédie Humaine* que dans les œuvres de tout autre auteur. N'a-t-il pas, dans les *Contes Drôlatiques*, fait revivre le xvi^{e} siècle dans son esprit et dans sa langue? Et n'est-il pas presque le seul parmi vous qui ait su écrire le boniment? Le *boniment*! Qu'est-ce donc que le boniment? Le dictionnaire me dit qu'on appelle ainsi: l'annonce charlatanesque que le pitre fait dans sa parade. Eh, bien, il faut étendre la signification du mot; le boniment, c'est l'*inspiration originale.* Possède par les mots, le pitre se dépouille de la réalité quotidienne, et, dans son extase, il devient le frère, au moins le cousin germain, du *prophète* et du *poète.* Tous les trois parlent sans souci de ce qu'ils vont dire, tandis que l'homme de talent le sait fort bien. Au lieu d'être l'esclave de la pensée, le *verbe* devient le maître et il l'entraîne en la forçant à faire des culbutes dans l'herbe, et des sauts vertigineux vers les étoiles. Prophète, pitre ou poète, le verbe est ton guide, et tu te réjouis du tumulte des mots et des images, sans savoir ni comment ni d'où ils viennent. Le reste est raison, logique, talent. Le boniment, c'est la couronne, le manteau, la besace et le bourdon des maîtres d'autrefois, et la fard, la perruque et la canne à pommeau doré des maîtres d'ajourd'hui. Peut-être y a-t-il plus de boniment dans la littérature anglaise que dans la vôtre. Mon Dieu! qu'est-ce que je dis? Rabelais, le grande maître du boniment, vivait un siècle avant Shakespeare. Quel oubli! Mais parmi vos auteurs modernes je ne me souviens pas d'un seul. Si, Victor Hugo! Un si grand maître de la langue n'aurait pas su s'en passer; mais il me semble—je tâche d'éviter tout ce qui touche à la polémique—il me semble tout de même, que l'on peut tout trouver chez Hugo, tout,—sauf la saveur de la vie, qui, aussi, bien que celle de la langue, est essentielle. Mais je me souviens des *Choses vues.* Comme il a bien fait parler Mlle George qui est venue chez lui, vieille et déchue, pour lui dire que Rachel manquait d'égards envers elle!

Il vaut mieux laisser Victor Hugo de côté, autrement je n'en sortirais pas. Il s'agit de Balzac. J'aurais voulu ouvrir un roman de Balzac et vous lire certains passages; mais les questions artistiques ne se décident pas avec des textes; l'art s'adresse à notre sensibilité plutôt qu'à notre raison. Notre sensibilité change de jour en jour et elle dépend des circonstances. Les mêmes passages de Balzac qui, autrefois, m'avaient fait penser à Shakespeare, lus à haute voix aujourd'hui, pourraient me sembler tout différents. Pourtant je ne voudrais pas rester sur une simple affirmation et vous trouveriez la plaisanterie mauvaise, si je vous conseillais de vous enfermer chez vous pour lire Shakespeare et Balzac. La *Comê die Humaine* a cinquante volumes; Shakespeare a laissé trente-sept drames; des années et des années passeraient et vous seriez encore là cherchant des textes que j'ai trouvés par hasard, et il y a bien longtemps. Je vais tout avouer. Une nuit, je lisais Shakespeare, et une scène entre charretiers et palefreniers m'a tellement plu que, pendant des jours, je ne songeais qu'à la beauté du dialogue, à cette langue érudite et populacière. A la fin de la semaine, par un hasard littéraire, j'ouvris *César Birotteau* à la page où le parfumeur va à la halle acheter, des noisettes pour fabriquer sa fameuse huile. Au lieu de se contenter de raconter, comme tout autre l'aurait fait, qu'après avoir marchandé il finite par acheter quelques milliers de francs de noisettes, Balzac décrit toute la scène avec la marchande. Remarquez bien que la marchande n'est pas un caractère dans le roman: on ne la revoit plus. C'est donc uniquement pour le plaisir d'entendre son boniment que Balzac l'a fait parler. Shakespeare, me suis-je dit, a fait parler le palefrenier et le charretier pour la même raison. Quelques pages plus loin, Balzac conduit son lecteur chez l'illustre Gaudissart, le commis-voyageur de génie, et il fait débiter tout son métier dans un jargon épouvantable et charmant. Ce n'est pas de la sténographie, mais une reconstitution littéraire pénétrée de l'esprit de Balzac. Veuillez lire les passages indiqués et s'ils ne vous satisfont pas entièrement, tournez les feuilles d'un autre roman et vous trouverez, j'en suis sûr, des passages qui réussiront mieux à vous convaincre, peut-être bien parce que c'est vous qui les aurez trouvés et mon pas moi.

Vous savez tous que Shakespeare a beaucoup écrit en prose et que sa prose est aussi belle que ses vers; les vers de Shakespeare sont rarement rimés; il passe avec aisance de la prose aux vers et des vers à la prose. Comme versificateur, il fut aussi fort que Balzac était faible. Dans son étude sur le grand romancier, Gautier relève un vers tout à fait extraordinaire, car dans les douze syllabes Balzac a trouvé moyen de faire trois fautes de prosodie. Dans *Les Illusions Perdues*, Balzac attribue à Lucien de Rubempré trois sonnets écrits dans les styles les plus différents. La Tulipe est de Gautier, La Marguerite est de Mme de Giradin; je ne crois pas qu'on sache qui a écrit la troisième. De tous les hommes au monde, il était, peut-être, le plus insensible à la beauté des vers, et, comme il vivait à une époque où tout le monde aimait la poésie, excepté lui, il est probable que as haine—car il fallait bien qu'il haït les vers, autrement il n'aurait pas décrit Canalis—a beaucoup aidé à créer la légende que Balzac ne savait pas écrire le français. Il suffit de peu de chose pour créer une légende. Balzac écrivait avec abondance, il écrivait, avec une grande facilité, il a écrit de sa main *La cousine Bette* en quarante nuits. Il y a des négligences de style, même des incorrections; il y en a aussi dans Shakespeare; l'incorrection est toujours regrettable, mais elle ne prouve pas qu'un auteur ne soit pas un écrivain de souche. Pire que l'incorrection est l'effort; dès l'instant où le critique remarque que l'auteur fait un effort, il a presque toujours raison de conclure que le livre n'est pas écrit par un grand écrivain. Autrefois je croyais que le talent consistait dans la recherche de l'épithète rare, mais je ne le crois plus; je sais maintenant où cela conduit. Voulez-vous que je vous cite un exemple? Dans les premières pages de *Salâmmbo,* Flaubert fait des efforts désespérés pour représenter les sons des différentes langues qu'on entend chez les mercenaires. Il dit qu'on entendait à côté du lourd patois dorien retentir les syllabes cultiques bruissantes comme des chars de bataille, et les terminaisons ioniennes se heurtaient aux consonnes du désert, après commedes cris de chacal. Je ne crois plus au clair de lune qui, dans la grande scène d'amour de Mme Bovary, se reflète dans le fleuve, d'abord comme un candélabre et puis comme un serpent aux écailles d'argent. Et, si possible, je crois encore moins aux lacets du corset de Mme Bovary qui sifflaient comme des serpents, quand elle se déshabillait à l'auberge.

Mais il me semble que je m'éloigne de mon sujet; les angoisses que Flaubert éprouvait en écrivant seraient le sujet d'une autre conférence. J'espère qu'elle sera écrite bientôt; j'aurai beaucoup de plaisir à l'écouter. La mienne, sur Balzac et Shakespeare, est finie; mais avant des nous séparer, je voudrais vous remercier de la grande complaisance que vous avez mise à écouter la parole d'un barbare. Ce n'est pas la première fois, que j'essaie d'écrire dans votre langue; j'avais déjà quelques flirts dans mon passé, des strophes, des rondeaux, des ballades . . . en somme des amour courtes et sans importance. Mais cette conférence a duré bien plus longtemps; elle constitue une véritable infidélité à ma langue maternelle; une liaison d'un mois qui m'a fait beaucoup souffrir. Et le résultat de cette liaison est si médiocire, que je me suis décidé à rompre et à ne plus recommencer.

CHAPTER 14.

AS soon as I returned from the stage, the director of *La Revue Bleue* drew me aside and said: you read your lecture very well; but why didn't you read it like that to me? And while I searched for a suitable answer, the appearance of Mademoiselle Richenberg brought a light of divination into his face, and he said: you know Mademoiselle Richenberg?

Of course many friends came to tell me that I had not lost my voice, and that every word had been heard, *et que ma conférence est une des plus jolie de ce temps-ci.* Even *la grande diseuse* had a compliment for me, and in a mood of satisfaction at not having failed altogether in my enterprise (if that word does not exaggerate the importance of going to Paris to deliver a lecture on Shakespeare and Balzac) I returned home to my hotel, the excitement of addressing a French audience evaporating as I passed street after street, till on reaching the Rond Point I stopped, brought to bay: after all, what have I done but deliver a lecture? A commonplace event enough. A little later I took a different view and walked, assuring myself with much complacency that my lecture was quite different from the amorphous spouting with which the professional lecturer seeks to entertain an audience. And with which, I added, sadly, he produces better entertainment than my elaborate composition, elaborate, yet not elaborate enough, for in a foreign language one cannot reweave. And deep in meditation I pursued my way through the scintillating Champs Elysées, saying: it is not till the third weaving that my little patterns begin to appear; in the first two I am like everybody else, and on these words my thoughts fell suddenly into recollections of the summer I had spent in Dublin, returning to the text whenever I found myself alone, amplifying and enriching it and with good results, for my lecture contained some pretty bits; but I had not been able to pick the woof to threads again and re-weave, the labour of re-weaving in a foreign language being too great. Or was it laziness? No; I am never lazy when literature calls. Or was it that nine thousand words are too many to concentrate on in a foreign language? My English tangles very often, and the knots are hard to untie, I cried, and remembering that I had not spent more time on the French text than I had on many an English, I continued: Words I have always and in abundance, and an ear for rhythm; my enduring foe is composition; and it was to composition that I succumbed rather than to language, unless it be contended that in English I should have had more courage and would have pulled the whole thing to threads and re-woven it.

How that verb to weave bores me, I murmured, and I tried to cast the lecture out of my head, and succeeded in doing so for a little while, but it was back again presently; and at the Place de la Concorde my thoughts were at flirt with the belief that it were easier to write in French about things than abstractions; and as a lecture must be largely subjective it would seem that mine should have been written in English and translated into French. But a translator's French brings my stomach up. It did that and copiously when *Esther Waters* was translated by a retired custom-house officer, and a third of the text, one hundred pages eliminated by a journalist (four hundred quarter pages) so that it might be made to fit the format that Hachette insisted upon, fool that he is, treating me as he treated Tourguéneff, for experience throws light only on the waters we have passed through, none on those that lie ahead of us. How true. Good God, how true! Again I pursued my way, dreaming of the hour that had gone by till the thought of a bit of criticism that I had not been able to introduce into the text stopped me in my walk, and I stood thinking that this overlooked bit of criticism would have set forth more plainly than anything in the lecture the difference between the seventeenth and the twentieth century. So it was in a great humour of dissatisfaction that I set forth again, turning over in my mind the scene I had selected to show two great intelligences in the practice of their art, the scene between Juliet and her nurse; the nurse coming to Juliet, saying: he is dead, he is dead, he is dead! She is speaking of Tybalt, but Juliet in her great stress of mind believes Romeo the one dead, and forthwith breaks into speech too rhetorical to be accepted as an expression of true grief. No doubt the critical fraternity have found the wording of Juliet's grief lacking in that simplicity which is part of grief, but it is not to the wording of the scene that I was minded to call their attention, but to Shakespeare's shallow comprehension of it: for after setting his heroine bewailing her lover with all the eloquence he can supply her with, he sets her bewailing her kinsman immediately after, and with the same eloquence, thereby departing from true grief, which always weeps with undivided mind. But of a certainty Balzac would have felt that Juliet could have had no thought for her kinsman's death, not then at least: he would have made a point of it, showing how joy overpowers grief, leaving grief without words, mayhap, without a tear; and this natural stint of the heart would have cheered Balzac's genius to carry the scene beyond the imagination of the world's greatest poet. But thou'rt pitting sunrise against midday, the Shakespearean critic will cry, which is true, for Shakespeare was a young man when he wrote *Romeo and Juliet;* his inward gaze had strengthened when he rewrote *Hamlet;* but the waxing of Shakespeare's mind is not part of this examination but the presumption that Balzac, at the height of his genius, would have tried for something more than Shakespeare tried for.

As all will yield this point without squabble it will be no more than fair to the poet to consider if the depths of the human mind which Balzac might descend into in his narrative and make plain and convincing could be dealt with on the meagre stage; and if Shakespeare did not do well to welcome rhetoric in this issue of drama, for, as has often been said, the first obligation of the artist is to find his strength in his medium. Even so, the question has not been disposed of, for by accepting the alleged stint of his medium Shakespeare puts his actress in a quandary, his actress being part of his medium; and the quandary lies in this, that the mime cannot dismiss contradictions and discrepancies airily like the critic, saying that they are part and parcel of the man's genius. Much more than the critic the mime is part and parcel of the poet's genius; she is it and it is she, indivisibly as body and soul. She has become part and parcel of her creator—a transubstantiation that we can appreciate in this one. Her voice passing away from her becomes Juliet's, and all her body pulses with Juliet's passion; her ideas, her gestures, her gait are of Verona; and every line and word in the text that is not with her is against her. So it must be allowed that the scene between Juliet and the nurse is a pause, a seventh day in which the creator undoes his work in failing to supply the mime with true nature, giving her instead a spout of words with which she may be able to conceal his shortcomings and get for herself peradventure such a clapping of hands as will drown that voice of conscience which awakens in every woman who essays the part. But can it be that none before me has perceived this disparity, no other critic? But whether the first or last it is certain that every one of the women who has passed out of herself into Juliet did not do so without feeling this scene to drop; and none perchance so acutely as the bad mime, for she who is possessed of reason says to herself: we may not grieve equally for two misfortunes, and of all no one grieves when her heart is overflowing with joy at her lover's escape from death.

And this poor mime meditates and ponders, her acting getting worse and worse (we are supposing the show to be her own, for if it were not she would have been cast out long ago), till one night, after a depressing talk with the manager, a hope quickens in her that though the tangle is beyond her powers to unravel a psychologist might help her. She has read novels, and there is one among the novelists who can weigh such trifles, whether a woman should accept a cup of tea or reject it, so the poor mime says: It will not be difficult for him to distinguish between two griefs. She goes to him, her heart swelling with hope, and we may pass a moment profitably in the contemplation of the twain sitting beside each other; the pale and drawn face of the agitated mime, and the large, impassive, shaven face of the Bostonian psychologist holding his chin, seeking for words, and in such painful congestion of phrase is he that the bad mime begins to fear lest her rash adventure will precipitate an attack of apoplexy. At last the spasms are ended, and the poor lady mime stands lost and speechless in a desert of qualifying clauses.

As soon as this amusement of my imagination had died away, and I passed out of the arcade, I said to myself: But elsewhere Shakespeare's texts are often in conflict with the human mind and its instincts, and nowhere more notably than in Falstaff's speeches; and I walked as far as the Hôtel Continental, immersed in regret that I had classed Falstaff among the vast humanities of our poetry, and it was not till I reached the Rue Castiglione that, returning to the subject of my meditation, Falstaff, I said it would be interesting to persuade the actors who had played him to relate their experiences, but acting springs out of the subconscious; actors feel, dream, aspire, but reason rarely, unless they are bad actors; we should question them in vain, none could give an account of himself in his study of the part. But is this sure? The actor, if he were caught unawares, might let drop an illuminating phrase, and I remembered with pleasure Rachel's famous: *j'ai bisquée.* As soon as she began to suspect and to hope that she was something more than a girl who could pick up a livelihood by reciting in the cafés, she went to an actor for advice, saying she thought she had a turn for the stage. After hearing some poems, he said: You have a nice voice, but I cannot tell what your talent may be till I've heard you in a part. He gave her Berenice to study, and in a few days she returned to astonish him with an entirely new reading, and with an acceptable one. How, asked the breathless actor, did all this come to you? and his astonishment was not lessened when she told him that she had not thought about the character at all. Nor had she even read the play, only her own part. I tried to imagine, said this woman of great genius, that it was all happening to me, *et que j'ai bisquée.*

Nobody had ever remarked that Berenice sulked till Rachel discovered her in a sulk. As likely as not Racine was not aware of it, and a regret welled up in me that I had never taken Weir round to the public-house after one of his performances of Falstaff, and asked him if he thought the character lent itself to as many interpretations as Hamlet did, or some other question even more likely to lead him into talk. No better actor than Weir ever lived, yet he could do no more than to repeat the text of the play. In the slang of the theatre, he got nothing on it. As I crossed the next street and entered the arcade again I remembered the night that Tree sent one of his footmen to ask me to come to see him in his dressing-room. The invitation was opportune, for I felt I had something to say about Falstaff, and to whom could

I say it more pointedly than to Tree, who had just come off the stage in his great belly? Your Falstaff, I said to him, is as good as any that have been, and none will be better, but the part has been intellectualised out of all possibility of acting. The old vice that Cervantes fell into in the second part of *Don Quixote,* fell into, it is true, but not as flagrantly as Shakespeare did when he set the knight musing and deciding what honour is and what honour is not at the end of the scene in Shakespeare's version, at the end of the act in yours. We go through our lives, Tree, victims of conventions and prejudices, and if I hadn't come into the theatre to-night it is possible that I should never have apprehended how entirely artificial and vain Falstaff is, and all the way hither my imagination was soothed with the entirely natural character of Sancho, who would provide you, I said, with a much better acting part. It cannot be that you don't agree with me, Tree, that a great many of Falstaff's speeches are incompatible with his character—briefly, that he is too heavily intellectualised to be acted. Tree did not answer; but it was plain that he brooded over what I had said and was becoming aware that the part of Falstaff contained certain irreconcilable elements, and that all he had missed in the part might be attributed to Shakespeare.

His tacit acquiescence in my discovery that Falstaff was not an acting part encouraged me to remark that it was very odd that Tolstoy, who could not be said to be committed like our critics to praise Shakespeare in and out of season, when he is right and when he is wrong, especially when he is wrong, thought proper to remark that Falstaff is the only character in Shakespeare's plays whose words are in agreement with his acts. The very opposite is the truth to me, and you are of the same opinion, Tree, I can see you are; it could not be else, for you have lived the part. But those who have studied the texts—— Tree began. You mean those who read Shakespeare twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four, as Max says, I broke in: Sir Sidney Lee, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Quiller Couch, all the many Sirs; for everybody who has studied the text of Shakespeare has been knighted: Shakespeare is served by a vast knighthood. But Tolstoy didn't want to be knighted, and I confess to being puzzled by his mistake. But no, there is no puzzle in it, for it was Tolstoy's prime business to put people wrong, and that being so, Falstaff, the most stagey figure in Shakespeare, was declared to be the most natural. Get thyself to Spain, Tree, and quickly. But which wilt thou play? Sancho, or the Don? Sancho is ourselves when he calls for the island, but Falstaff calls for sack only for that the audience must be made to laugh, and we believe in him neither in tipple nor in love. Of course, I should play the Don. But why this bitter quarrel with Falstaff? Tree asked. And I told him of the purple passage in my lecture in which Falstaff, being all belly, is said to be the symbol and hieroglyph of life: for all things, whether they walk, fly or crawl, have bellies. But you can withdraw the passage, said Tree. No, Tree, I cannot, for the lecture is in French, and I might not find anything as good to replace it, but I am conscience-stricken for the retaining of it.

And as I pursued my way along the echoing arcades it seemed to me that this conversation about Falstaff was the last I had with Tree; and I might have meditated upon my dead friend till I was well past the Hotel Meurice, if it had not been that thoughts of something else that I had failed to include in my lecture pursued me to the door of the Hotel Brighton, causing me to halt as I ascended the stairs, causing my hands to drop from my cravat and to leave it dangling, while I considered how it was that I had omitted to quote some passages from *Madame Bovary* even more ridiculous than the one in which the moon looked like a great silver candelabra at the bottom of the river, and afterwards like a serpent with silver scales.

Christianity, I said, on entering my room, is not a stranger belief than the cult of the inevitable word. This strange religion arose suddenly in a small country house near Rouen, and spread quickly from thence over the entire world till the cow-boys of Texas rode after the inflamed heifer, shouting: She ran in her intrepid nakedness—referring not to the heifer, but to some fisher girl who ran along the Boulogne sands in her pelt—in what book I have forgotten. But how did this belief in the inevitable word arise? Like all beliefs and diseases, mysteriously.

In the fifties was the Word and the Word was with Flaubert, I said, and began to trace the origin of Flaubert's reputation to a reaction against Byron's Laras and Corsairs, his going to Greece to die for an idea, to Chateaubriand's tomb, the one he built by the side of the sounding sea to pirates and brigands who had become so much more intolerable in literature than in reality that everybody welcomed the idea that a writer had arisen who did not try to dine in a baronial hall among retainers, but was satisfied with a chop at home, and did not keep for pets, pythons, eagles, wolves or jaguars, who preferred cats, and spent his time at the window in his dressing-gown watching the Seine flowing by, thinking all the time of the inevitable Word, which he never found till late in the evening.

It was easy for the grocer to understand that it took a long time to find the inevitable Word; for he had sought it himself in vain, and he appreciated Monsieur Flaubert, who wrote with difficulty just like everybody else, and when it became known for certain that *Madame Bovary* was written in a dressing-gown, the reaction against romanticism carried the book along with it. A better explanation than this I cannot find for the extraordinary belief that has possessed France for over fifty years, and if this explanation prove inacceptable, we shall have to hold by the somewhat depressing belief, for which, indeed, much can be said, that the masterpiece is but the mood of the moment, and that the wisest cannot tell an inspired work from an uninspired. There are the two solutions, my friend, and waste not your time trying to find a third.

As I took off my boots I remembered Baudelaire, who was the only one who dared to write coldly about this book, and if he knew, others must have known, for he was not as clever a man as Gautier or Sainte-Beuve. And many others must have known that *Madame Bovary* was not as well written a book as *Eugênie Grandet.* But for the reason that I have given, or at least hinted at, they held their tongues; they too were duped by the mood of the moment, and it may be that Gautier felt it were better to teach by example than by exhortation. Nor were they the first to acquiesce in the universal folly which is man. Constantine acquiesced in Christianity, and Henry IV in Catholicism. But we must not suppose they were duped. Nor were Gautier and Sainte-Beuve nor was Gerard de Nerval. Baudelaire, we know, was not. But what is all this to me, since I was duped, and to the top of my bent? Year after year I believed *Madame Bovary* and *L'Education Sentimentale* to be great works. Good God! I cried, and stopped on the third button—that article published in *Cosmopolis* will one day be brought up against me, and I know not how it is to be destroyed, unless I come back to Paris with another lecture in which I shall expose the stiff, paralysed narrative, the short sentence trussed like a fowl, with the inevitable adjective, in the middle of everyone. To repent is a great temptation and it is hard to apprehend how one was duped; for even in the years of *Cosmopolis* I must have known that the writing of patter represents the highest point of literary skill; and so slight was Flaubert's literary skill that it would be difficult to find in *L'Education Sentimentale* three consecutive lines of dialogue. Arnaud meets Frederick in the Boulevard. How are you? said he, and taking Frederick's arm he spoke to him for half-an-hour about indifferent things. Poor old fellow, he fell into this formula and stuck in it. My lecture must be free from exaggeration, for although Flaubert does not sit on the throne, he is entitled to a seat on the steps of the throne, as Yeats would say, and must not be hustled out of the throne-room unceremoniously for it can be said with truth that he was better than his fellows, better than Zola, better than Daudet, better than Goncourt—for this last one I have still a leaning, and despite his foolish trivialities we remember Manette Salomon! It will be enough for me to say that the business of a narrator is to narrate, and that Flaubert had little or nothing to narrate. And to say this will be justifiable, and to point out that a narrative should never be the same, but always moving, and to make my meaning clear I shall have to speak of Apuleius and his *Golden Ass*, saying: a delicious dancing narrative, always alive, always sparkling like the Odyssey, for Apuleius spent many years of his life in Athens, and learnt the secrets of Greek narrative. Everything comes from Greece, I said, and was falling asleep when a remembrance of Fotis awakened me, and I said: the most truly human love scene written for eighteen hundred years, neither animal nor angelic, and so pretty, as graceful as a kitten, and I continued till the very words of the old Roman poet began singing in my head:

> She had about her middle a white and cleane apron, and she was girded about her bodie under her pappes with a swathell of redde silke, and she stirred the potte and turned the meate with her fayer and white handes,

in such sorte that with stirrings and turnings the same, her loines, and hippes did likewise move and shake, whiche was in my minde a comely sight to see. These things when I sawe, I was halfe amased, and stoode musinge with my selfe, and my courage came then upon me, whiche before was skant. And I spake unto Fotis merely, and said: O Fotis, how trimly you can stirre the potte, and how finelie (with shakinge your buttockes) you can make potage. O happy and twise happy is he to whom you give leave and license but to touche you there.

We have been writing love scenes for eighteen hundred years, yet it may be doubted if one could be discovered as free from subterfuge and deceit as Apuleius's relation of the pleasure he felt in watching the swing of Fotis's hips and the poise of her body as she moves among her pots and pans. Be it noted that she is displayed as she would wish to be, for what young girl would not like a young man to admire the sway of her hips? It requires great talent to omit all sentimentality and to keep the thing what it essentially is—a pretty sight. And Apuleius has done this. We forget that the girl is a servant girl, and that Apuleius is a scholar, and that the twain are in the kitchen. We forget all detail, so intense and complete is the humanity. The touch is exquisite throughout, spontaneous and true; and never more so than when Fotis promises to relieve Apuleius of his desire and redeems her promise, coming to him when he lies in bed with wine and flowers, kissing him prettily. And then I seemed to lose control over my thoughts, and must have fallen asleep soon after.

CHAPTER 15

MONSIEUR, on vous demande, the page cried. What time is it? I muttered, turning over, ready to fall asleep again. *Dix heures, monsieur.* And already somebody wants to see me? What's his name? *Voici sa carte, monsieur.* As soon as the page had drawn the curtains I read a name almost aristocratic, and the name of a newspaper known for its distinguished tone and literary associations. Tell the gentleman I'm in bed, but if he doesn't mind coming upstairs I'll see him. *Bien, monsieur,* and a minute or two later a young Frenchman came into the room, apologising for his visit, giving as a reason that he had come in the hope of obtaining an account from me of my first years in Paris.

I'm afraid it's a long story you're asking me to tell you. So much the better, he answered. We like long stories in France. I thought it was just the other way, I answered: your novels are shorter than ours. It is the telling of a story that decides its length, my visitor replied, and raising myself up in bed so that I might bow acknowledgment to my visitor's discreet compliment I became aware of the presence of a young man of the upper classes, one probably passing through journalism on his way to literature; and, my curiosity stimulated to examine him again, I perceived a small, finely cut face and kind, almost female eyes, that told me I could count upon him for encouragement during my narrative, which I began to fear would be a long one, and difficult. But he knows how to listen, I said to myself, and that is a great help, for the better half of a story is supplied by the intelligent listener or listeners.

I am tempted to tell the story you are good enough to ask me to tell, for if I'm not mistaken it is of sufficient general interest, though the events in it are particular to myself; what I mean is this, that it is full of hints of a guiding Providence, and I take it for truth that no one, however exempt he may be from belief in revealed religion, ever escapes from the hope, the suspicion, that his life is not altogether at random; and if there is a Providence anywhere there is one everywhere, a law over small things as well as great. You will pardon this little exordium of Providence, my story being unable to stand without it. My visitor acquiesced, and I said: I will continue a little further, saying that everybody, when he looks back, discovers some decisive moment from which his life expanded or narrowed. You ask me to tell how I came to cut a figure in Parisian society in the seventies; if I leave Providence out of my narrative I shall be looked upon as egotistical, and if I observe the hand of Providence too frequently, I shall be considered a fatalist. Is not this so? As yourself has said, my visitor answered, Providence is everywhere or nowhere, and I agree with you that a partial Providence, one that intervenes occasionally when the racket and disorder become intolerable and retires again into the clouds, leaving men and women to their own devices, is ridiculous. Yet that is the sort of Providence that humanity accepts more easily than a complete guidance or a complete absence of guidance. Alas, I said, human life is essentially illogical; only art is reasonable. And art itself must not be too logical, my visitor interjected, setting me thinking that I must be careful with my story for my listener was certainly an intelligent young man.

The decisive moment in my life, I began, was when Jim Brown, a cousin, a painter of no fame whatsoever, nor of talent properly considered, but gifted with the faculty of distributing ideas over large canvases, Doré fashion, faced round, palette in hand, and with his back to a picture of Julius Cæsar overturning a Druid altar, said:

if you want to learn painting you must go to Paris! The word Paris seemed to flame up in my mind, and my life, till that moment objectless, acquired direction; but I had to wait till I came of age, and as soon as twenty-one had struck, I went away, as is related in *The Confessions of a Young Man*, to live in Paris in the Hôtel Voltaire, directed thither by another painter. The Hôtel Voltaire was chosen because it was near to the Beaux Arts. Some of the story I am telling here is included in *The Confessions of a Young Man*, but the present telling is more providential than the first. I did some drawing in Cabanel's studio, but left it after a few weeks. And if you hadn't, nothing that chanced would have chanced, my visitor interjected. Nothing, I answered. You will see in a moment how necessary it was that I should be taken out of the Hôtel Voltaire and removed to the Hôtel de Russie, Boulevard des Italiens, whither my destiny awaited me. But the ways of Providence are round about, and the rough life at the Beaux Arts put it into my head that I should do well to seek out some great painter and try to persuade him to take me as a private pupil. I had seen a photograph of Sêvre's *Bacchante*, and I called on him, but like Cabanel he did not take private pupils, and my hope then centred on Jules Lefèbvre; but he no more than Cabanel nor Sêvre could receive a pupil in his studio. There is a public studio, he said, in the Passage des Panoramas and I correct the drawings two days a week. As this sounded plausible I bade him good-bye and went in search of the Passage des Panoramas, and finding its studio to be less rowdy than the Beaux Arts I was easily persuaded by the artful southerner, Julien, to join it.

His classes began at eight in the morning, and, the Passage des Panoramas being half-an-hour's walk from the quay Voltaire, a change of lodging seemed necessary. My banker, John Arthur, recommended me to the Hôtel de Russie at the corner of the Rue Drouout and the

Boulevard, an old-fashioned place that had just come into the possession of an enterprising Belgian who had taken it over from the late proprietor, together with a curious little collection of permanent and occasional customers. The Belgian led me up seemingly unending stairs and pressed two rooms at the end of a passage upon me, saying that I should be *tout à fait chez moi,* and that my valet could have a room on the floor above for two francs and a half a day (in those days, as you see, one lived cheaply); he conducted me downstairs to a dining-room in sombre wall-paper and *des buffets envieux chêne, sculpté en Belgique,* and brought hither possibly by Monsieur Riguel, unless, indeed, the ex-proprietor was a Belgian and left his *mobilier* to his successor. That dining-room has been transformed, long since brought up to date (into what region of conjecture am I not adventuring, not having seen it for forty years), yet I will aver that it has been transformed out of all resemblance to its original self, and is now a miracle of white paint and gilding. It may even have fallen out that a corner has been found for a few musicians, but in '73 it was *en famille. Les buffets* in carved oak have been mentioned, but not the five and twenty chairs to match, nor the three windows overlooking the Boulevard, nor the waiters, two, or were there three, who took their orders from Monsieur Riguel, an eagle-faced man whose immense moustache and imperial are still fixed in my memory. He placed me *par complaisance* next to Uncle Sam, and what a veritable Uncle Sam he was, his tall skull and aquiline nose and mottled complexion carrying my thoughts back to the tomahawks and plumes of Wyoming. By him and opposite me sat an elderly Italian Countess, who after dinner accepted a large cigar from Uncle Sam: Uncle Sam extended his cigar-case to me and we all smoked together, Uncle Sam jerking out his words, telling me, with an air of authority and pride, that he had sat at the head of the table for more than thirty years, whereas the Countess was only an occasional visitor, on the same plane, or very nearly, as the French officer, who sat next to her. He drew my attention to the French officer and spoke of him in terms of great respect. Monsieur le Capitaine always brought his wife with him, and I saw a woman about forty who once had been pretty, but had fallen into flesh, and was now lumpy behind and in front. She spoke but little, deeming it sufficient to giggle at her husband's sallies; the *boute-en-train* of the *table d'hôte* was Monsieur le Capitaine, a short, thick-set man whose face a great black beard almost covered; his eyes, almost as black as his beard, twinkled at his jokes, which were much relished by Uncle Sam. Two Spaniards loom up dimly in my memory, elderly gentlemen of quiet demeanour, who spoke English, and who, for that reason, were often placed next to me. I think that one used to tell improper stories in a faint voice; the other is remembered by reason of his having said that after seventy it is seldom that a day passes without bringing a thought of death to one's mind, to which I made the consoling answer that it is not necessary to reach the age of seventy-three to think of death, for as soon as we pass to the age of reason we think of death daily.

So that was the spring-board, my visitor said, from which you jumped into Parisian society and became a somebody in it? It was, indeed, I answered, and you will see in a moment how it came about.

As I was about to tell of a certain providential link in a chain in which every link was providential, the waiter entered with a cup of chocolate and a *croissant*, and it seeming to me a great injustice to chocolate to allow it to get cold, I asked my visitor if it were permitted to me to breakfast, saying that to keep myself from supping chocolate as soon as it comes within my reach was beyond my powers of restraint. My visitor begged me to begin breakfast, saying pleasantly that while I supped and scrunched he would scribble his notes.

You are curious to hear how the Hôtel de Russie led to Victor Hugo, to Banville, to Zola, to the Goncourts, to Daudet, to Manet, to Degas, to Pissarro, to Renoir, to Halévy, to Meilhac, to Coppée, to Maupassant, to Catulle Mendès, to Alexis, to Céard, to—it is impossible to supply at once a complete list of all the men who were great in the seventies. Renan? No; I never met him. To the Hôtel de Russie Bernard Lopez came every Monday to dinner, a short, fat man with a large bald head, and only a rim of hair left about it, his chin descending step by step into a voluminous bosom, a sort of human guinea-pig. I cannot help saying it, for though the comparison is not polite, it will bring my old friend before you. He talked in a high falsetto voice, extending a podgy hand to me, for M. Riguel was kind enough to introduce us, whispering to me, in a husky voice: A great dramatic writer. At the words—great dramatic writer—I dropped into the chair beside him, not a little fluttered, and set myself to the task of persuading him to tell me about the plays he had written—not an easy task, for Bernard Lopez's conversation was somewhat trite and insipid. All the same he had written eighty or ninety plays, and had been acted in all the principal theatres: the exact number of plays, I have forgotten, but it was not far from a hundred, and the soup had not gone away before a project began to form in my mind—to go to one of the theatres performing a play by him after dinner. But on questioning him as to which theatre he would like me to visit, he told me that no play of his was being performed at present, which did not matter much, for it was more interesting to hear of the great writers with whom he had written the eighty or ninety plays than to see any one play; and the names he mentioned inspired a respect, an awe that could not have been increased. He had written plays with Dumas, Scribe, Saint Georges, Gautier, Banville; and to have written with so many different men did not depreciate him in my eyes, but raised him, and I thought of the appointments: a great man arriving at his house, or Lopez going to a great man's house, and the dramatic twain sitting opposite each other to settle what was to be done with the third act. His collaborations helped to transport him in my imagination among the slopes of Parnassus, and on hearing that he had written a play in verse, I saw him sitting there, lyre in hand: but, such is the way of all youthful vision, he seems to me now like a character fallen out of the Human Comedy—an old dramatic writer, long gone out of fashion, living upon some small income, but wearing all the same a well-brushed frock coat and immaculate linen. A bachelor, of course, and it was not till some months later that I learned he had been married to a woman with money, and that he dined every day at a different restaurant or hotel, not because he liked one better than another, but from habit.

And seeing that I liked talking to Monsieur Lopez, Monsieur Riguel arranged that I should sit next him always; and every succeeding Monday I learned a little more of dramatic writing and how it was practiced in Paris in the forties, fifties and sixties. At the end of the month I dared to invite him to accompany me to a café, and to allow me to offer him cups of coffee, glasses of Chartreuse. And cigars, my visitor interjected. No; Bernard Lopez did not smoke. And very soon, within a few months, Monsieur Lopez's companionship inspired me to write two plays, of which, I am glad to say, no trace remains, but his criticism of these early efforts were of permanent help to me; there can be no doubt of that. It was in his company that I purchased my first copy of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, and out of these poems and others he advised me to read arose, within a year, a small volume entitled *Flowers of Passion.* The book appeared in black, with a death's head, cross-bones and a lyre stamped in gold upon it; and it set people writing and talking; and Edmund Yates, seeing in the book an opportunity for a striking article, wrote three quarters of a column under the title of *A Bestial Bard*, beginning his criticism thus: This book should be burned by the common hangman while the author is being whipped at the cart's tail. In those days *The World* was a great paper, and before long all kinds of imitations of Yates's article began to appear in the Press, and these Mr. Provost, the publisher of the book, used to send me. One night I laid them before Bernard Lopez, who, though accustomed to violent articles, was astonished at the violence of these. They seem to have exhausted, he said, the vocabulary of abuse, and from our corner in the Café Madrid he began to spy a possible callaborator in me. We ought to write a play together, he said. The honour so suddenly and unexpectedly thrust upon me seemed too great. I was taken aback and thought of myself as a humble follower of Banville, Gautier and Gérard de Nerval. But what shall we write? I asked. What is to be the subject? Bernard Lopez answered at once: we might write a play about Luther; and I cried: how splendid of you to think of Luther! Oh yes, to write a play about Luther, and thinking of Luther I remembered him as a German monk who once shook the Papacy almost to its downfall. But that was enough. That he was a German and hated the Papacy was all I knew, but that was sufficient. How shall we write it? I asked doubtfully for at that time I was altogether without education. My spelling and grammar were as unconventional as a kitchenmaid's; of punctuation I had no faintest idea, and felt myself obliged to confide the fact to Lopez. It staggered him to hear that his collaborator could not tell the difference between a comma and a semicolon, but on being assured that I would employ somebody to change some of my commas to semicolons he decided to continue with me, encouraged, no doubt, by a certain copiousness of vocabulary; words I had in plenty, and for the next three months Lopez and I talked Luther in many various cafés, and every day I composed fifty, sixty, seventy, sometimes as many as a hundred blank verse lines. If it were Monday I went to meet him at the Hôtel de Russie, and if I had anything special on my mind I went to the Place Pigalle to take him out to dinner. We often dined at the Boule Noire, for the Hôtel de Russie had begun to seem old-fashioned to me now that I had come to live in Montmartre, in the Rue de la Tour des Dames, not far from the Place Pigalle, where Lopez lived—his house was in the block next to the Nouvelle Athènes. One evening our *séance de collaboration* had been unduly prolonged in some distant café, or maybe we had gone to see some play together, and it was nearly midnight before we reached the Place Pigalle, and there it occurred to Lopez or to me that it would be well to eat a *soupe à l'oignon* before parting.

Le Rat Mort, the café by the side of the Nouvelle Athènes, was celebrated at that time (*dans le quartier*) for its *soupe à l'oignon*, so we turned into it, and had hardly crossed the threshold when Lopez ran forward in his little tottering walk to extend his podgy little hand to a man who sat writing, a book beside him, and I cursed my luck, foreseeing that this acquaintance would divert the conversation from Luther, and I should not learn that evening certain facts regarding the peasant wars. So in a mood of resentment I allowed Bernard Lopez to entertain his acquaintance, pretending an interest in a woman who sat drinking beer opposite to us on the other side of the café till a man came and sat by her. As I could not legitimately pretend any further interest in her, my eyes were diverted to a somewhat hostile observation of Bernard Lopez's acquaintance, whose round head, prominent eyes, and white restless hand always trying to settle his shirt collar, a thing that was impossible to do, for the buttonhole would not hold the button any longer, annoyed me. Nor did the fact that the man bore a title, Monsieur le Comte Villiers de l'Ile Adam, attract me towards him, nor did Villiers win me easily, for his disjointed conversation irritated me as much as his appearance, and my dislike was at the point of turning to hatred when he began to quote *Paradise Lost*, a poem unknown to me at that time, but the mood of confession not being upon me at the moment I chose to hide my ignorance of the poem from Bernard Lopez and Villiers by pleading that Villiers' pronunciation of English had thrown me off my guard.

You must know Mallarmé, said Villiers. He receives on Tuesday evening in the Rue de Rome. But who is Mallarmé? I asked, and on learning that he was a man of letters and a poet my mood became gentler and I professed willingness to make his acquaintance. *Garçon, donnez moi de quoi écrire*, cried Villiers, and I watched him writing some six or seven lines on the thin paper habitual in cafés, almost cigarette paper, little thinking that these six or seven lines were charged with my life's destiny.

Whatsoever Mallarmé's talent might be he was a poet, and to seek him out on Tuesday would be a pleasant employment in the forthcoming week. The Place de L'Europe end of the Rue de Rome contains fine houses, but on the other side of the Boulevard Extérieur it drifts into a slum, and the house Mallarmé lived in did not inspire great hopes, for we are all subject to be impressed by appearance; a dingy staircase wound up in a narrow spiral past the third floor; on the fourth a door was opened by a short, thick-set man of middle age, whose appearance recalled a French workman, and whose voice rang with welcome on hearing that I came recommended by Villiers, and besought me to enter. We came to a small *salle à manger*, with a white porcelain stove at one end, a window at the other, a table and several chairs ranged along the walls. Now you, he said to me, who are accustomed to the sea, may well take the rocking-chair.

I have brought you my volume of verses, Monsieur Mallarmé, *Flowers of Passion*. How kind of you, he answered, taking the book from me and giving it his complete attention; he became absorbed, and thereby encouraged I ventured to draw his attention to some verses which seemed to me to deserve his consideration more than the others; and at once his face assumed a grave expression, and dropping into a chair beside a paraffin lamp, he seemed to be reading, and again the idea of a very handsome French peasant rose up in my mind, and I remembered that when he opened the door to me he recalled a house painter, but now as he stood reading my book under the paraffin lamp I began to feel that if he were a house painter and wore a smock he would have introduced into the smock some touch to distinguish it from all others; his clothes were not without a certain nattiness, and though the room was poor there were some interesting drawings on the walls. I caught sight of a piece of furniture in a corner that could not be else than genuine Louis XV. And once more his gentle and winning manner drew me to him.

An hour later his wife and daughter brought us two glasses of rum punch with lemon peel in them. After this act of hospitality, Madame and Mademoiselle withdrew, leaving the master to continue the lesson that he never ceased to unfold to all and sundry long after the departure of his first pupil, from Tuesday to Tuesday, to an ever-increasing number, till the little *salle à manger* became the centre of Parisian culture. It was a great surprise, on my return thither after many years of absence, to find that the flight of the years obliged somebody to surrender his chair to me; all were occupied; the late-comers sat on the floor, nowise embarrassed, glad to listen to the poet, who still stood in front of the porcelain stove roasting his calves. Of a sudden the great Hérédia burst into the quiet assembly; his entry seemed like a West Indian tornado; and Mallarmé's welcome to his old and unexpected guest was hearty, and we listened to Hérédia, who related with great gusto the literary jocosities of the Comte de Montesquiou, stories that I should regale you with, my dear sir, had I not remembered that you came here in quest of another story; so I will leave the *conquistador* narrating to a numerous and appreciative company and return to the time when I resented a visitor, almost unable to forgive the intruder, though he stayed but a little while. The evening is very clear in my mind when, struck by my constancy, he said: you are very faithful to my Tuesdays, and have earned a copy of *L'après-midi d'un Faune.* Whereupon he retired to his library (there were no books in the *salle à manger*; I never penetrated farther into his apartments) and returned with a thin leaflet printed on Japanese paper, illustrated by Manet, and adorned with tasselled ribbons—a leaflet published at one hundred francs, now worth many hundreds of francs.

I accepted the treasure with all the reverence I could assume; but in the years I am relating I was more interested in the play he was dreaming than in his poems. A wonderful play it was in truth, consisting of a single character: a young man, the last of a race, who lived in an old castle in which the wind howled, inciting the young man to go forth and rebuild the fortunes of his family. But the young man is uncertain whether the wind bids him stay or go forth, for, as Mallarmé put it: It is in the genius of the French language that the wind is always trying to say oui: ou-ou, the wind says again and again, almost getting out the word oui, but never quite reaching the last vowel. So the young man is left in doubt whether he should go forth or stay. Mallarmé gave imitations of the wind, and when he finished I asked him what steps he was going to take to have the play performed, and he answered, unwillingly, as it appeared to me, saying he would like to hire a caravan and act the play himself, wandering from village to village. For years he dreamed this play, and when he was not dreaming it he bethought himself of an epic that was to fulfil his literary aspirations. And the subject was even more fantastic than *Hamlet* and the wind. A man loves a woman and is about to marry her, but the seed that is in this man (the potential child), overwhelmed by the idea that his potential mother should cease to be a virgin, endeavours to dissuade his potential father. Again the *Hamlet* idea: To be or not to be, expressed in circumstance or lack of circumstance, never before meditated, we may say, never certain that none will set up a prior claim. An epic, he considered this one to be, and of all, one in which many subtle things could be said. But not a long epic, he was quick to remark, for like Poe he did not favour long poems; one of about a thousand lines, not more. The epic did not, however, possess him as completely as the tragedy of the boy and the wind. He believed in his *Hamlet,* I am sure, but I do not think a single line of it ever found its way into those mysterious little notebooks made of Japanese paper to which he said he used to confide the subjects of all his meditations; he liked to show these notebooks to me, and once he turned the tiny leaves over, apparently for my inspection, but as I put out my hand to take it he returned his notebooks to their drawer, saying: Hugo must have known that in writing *Hernani* and *Le Roi s'amuse* he was only continuing Shakespeare. He is thinking, I said to myself, of the young man in the feudal tower listening to the wind.

I am afraid that the pleasure of telling you about

Mallarmé and the olden days has drawn me away from the story that you came to hear, but not as much as it would seem at first sight, for, as has often been said, no link in the chain is more important than another, and as the Hôtel de Russe led me to Lopez, as Lopez led me to Villiers, as Villiers led me to Mallarmé, Mallarmé sent me to Manet, and the great turning-point in my life came about one night while we were talking about *L'après-midi d'un Faune*, on my remarking that Manet's drawings were the only modern drawings that had any character of their own; and Mallarmé, taking my phrase to heart, repeated it to Manet; and thinking that my golden hair and pink and white complexion were especially suitable to Manet's art, he said to me: you can see Manet any night you like at the Nouvelle Athènes; I have spoken about you to him. If Providence ever extended her hand to me it was the evening I turned into the Nouvelle Athènes with a great sheaf of proofs. Manet did not keep me long waiting; he came in some half-an-hour later, and recognising me from Mallarmé's description, he said, taking advantage of a favourable opportunity, his conversation with Degas beginning to languish: does not our conversation interrupt you in the correction of your proofs? Not in the least, I answered, and entered into conversation with him. But Degas called to him and he said: Come to my studio to-morrow; any time after four o'clock, 73, Rue Amsterdam, and I walked like one enchanted, daring to hope we might become friends; and all night long I looked forward to that studio as a young man in England looks forward to a university, without being, of course, aware that the Café of the Nouvelle Athènes was the moot-house of two great literary and artistic movements—a university in fact, and superior to a university inasmuch as it was a natural centre of culture; a university is an artificial centre, a last shift, but the moot-house of an artistic period is the best luck that can befall an aspirant to the arts; it was my luck for several years to be taken in hand by men of genius and literally pulled along, all working together, each contributing something.

But why this unique advantage of development should have fallen to my lot has been a matter of wonder to me all my life, for there was nothing in my verses nor in my drawings to entreat Manet's consideration, and I dare not allow my memory to recall the crude opinions I used to pick up and express in those years. How it was that Manet bore with me—— But a word about Manet from me will interest your readers, and it is worth telling that years after, sitting at dinner with Monet, in the Café Royal, Monet, speaking out of a long silence, said: How like Manet was to his painting; and I answered: Yes. Whereupon we fell to thinking of that fine, fearless, audacious face; of those pale, daring eyes; of that wonderful innocency of vision. If ever eyes spoke his did and what they said was, that there is but one shame—to be ashamed. And now I will tell you a story that I have never told to anybody before, for it will help you to understand Manet better than fifty pages of description by me or by any other, though the other be the greatest descriptive writer that ever lived. One afternoon he said to me as we left the studio: Last night as I was going to the Nouvelle Athènes I met two little girls who invited me up to their room, but no sooner were we there than they began to tell me sad stories about themselves, and as I didn't go there to listen to sad stories I gave them five francs each and went on to the Nouvelle Athènes. The only thing to do, wasn't it?

The importance of this anecdote seems to me very great if we would undertand the paintings, for it was the natural spontaneous frankness of his mind that prompted them. To be ashamed of nothing but to be ashamed was his motto, his emblem, his device. And now that you know him you will appreciate the advantages of association with a great original mind to a youngster in the early twenties, when the mind is most susceptible to influences. The choicest women of Paris used to come to Manet's studio, and among these flowers of womanhood the fairest was Mary Laurent, the mistress of Evans, the American dentist, he who contrived the escape of the Empress Eugènie to England, the delightful caprice in turn of all the great men of letters in old-time Paris—of Adrian Marx, of Becque, of Coppée, of Manet. The wittiest among women! How much of her wit was original and how much derived from the great minds with which she associated I have often aked myself, remembering always that it was not her lovers that prompted the graceful answer ready on her tongue when I asked her why she did not leave the doctor as soon as the deed of gift of two thousand a year was signed. Why should I, she replied, descend to a meanness when I could find content and perhaps happiness in being unfaithful in him? Her beauty was the tea-rose sort, and it appears again and again in Manet's work in pastel and oil. I am not sure that he ever tried a water-colour. One night—— But the anecdote that returns to me, *Le Docteur et ses Carnets*, has been told already in *Memoirs of my Dead Life*, and the sudden introduction of Mary's name into this narrative can only be justified inasmuch as it tells that all the influences of spiritual liberation and nourishment of the artistic temperament were forthcoming in that studio. Valtez, whose hair competed with mine, and whose bedroom Zola asked to see before he wrote *Nana*, was a frequent visitor, and many other names chime in my memory—every man's memory is a chime of fair women's names. But though Manet was the most potent influence, there were many others. It was in Manet's studio that I met Zola, and it was Manet that compelled me to go to the Rue de l'Assommoir at the Elysées Montmartre, disguised as a Parisian workman. It was there that he introduced me to Zola and how many others, for those were days of acquaintances and friends, of impressions and opinions. It was through Zola that I became a friend of the Goncourts, of Daudet, Duranty, Catulle Mendès, Coppée, Hérédia. To Victor Hugo I went one evening with Catulle, and the buffalo of poetry, as Heine called him, discoursed that night on Voltaire and Rousseau, giving his reasons for not being able to accept Rousseau's influence as comparable to Voltaire's. Banville was there, and just as we were about to separate between eleven and twelve the great poet said: No, I will not have you go. In honour of Banville we are to sup together. What gave rise to the remark I have forgotten, but I remember hearing Banville say that it was absurd for anybody to be in love after seventeen and three months. After a slight pause Hugo answered: I'd like to hear, Banville, what argument you would find to support your extravagant proposal, and Banville, finding himself in the midst of a company who could appreciate his humour, spoke for twenty minutes, throwing winged phrases into the air that, rising with rapid wing-beats, floated, wheeled and chased each other like birds whose pastime is flying, while we, almost breathless, watched their hazardous evolutions, glad at last at seeing them perch with a flutter of wings on a full stop—verb, noun, adjective, adverb, always in the right place: note of interrogation, note of exclamation, comma, semicolon, and every clause fitting perfectly in that improvisation on the theme that it is absurd to be in love after seventeen and three months.

Wilde's talks and Whistler's was well enough, but compared with Banville's their words were almost wingless. I could talk to you about Coppée and his love of Mary Laurent, whom I used to call *Toute la lyre*, so numerous were her loves among artists—a musician was her last adventure; but the story you came to hear is how an

Englishman came to be very nearly transformed into a Frenchman in the seventies. Because I was always wax within, and the body being subject to the mind my English appearance began to wane and to shape itself afresh, as can be seen in Manet's portrait. But to become French a complete knowledge of the language was necessary, and the question came—what language was my literature to be written in? for neither my French nor my English has been to school; about half-a-column without a mistake was my biggest break. To turn from billiard parlance to racing, Moore was left behind at the post in two languages, Oscar Wilde is reported to have said to Frank Harris, and he'll have to live a long time to reach the point from which we all started—a criticism whose fault is that it does not go far enough. Wilde should have said: Nature allows the intelligence she intends for a long literary journey to lie latent and to develop slowly. But why did you not choose to learn French, the young gentleman who came to hear the story of my life in Paris asked. Your friends were here and your language was here as much as it was over yonder. Why did you leave us? Am I to understand that Providence again took you by the hand?

The reason that brought me back to England was a letter from my agent telling me that it was impossible to collect rents owing to the Land League and that he was not prepared to risk his life by serving eviction notices, any longer; and feeling that my life was over and done with in Paris, I determined that the rupture should be complete, and vowed, as the steamer left your cliffs, that I would return no more, but keep the past as a relic. The hand of Providence, said my visitor, is visible in the story you tell me, sir. But Providence seems to have been a wasteful hussy. She should have managed to bring you back into English literature without stirring up a peasant war in Ireland. In a prose poem by Tourguéneff, I said, Providence is discovered in her cave meditating, and her meditation is so deep that her interlocutor thinks she is planning some great amelioration of the human lot; but she tells him she is thinking how she may give greater power to the leg muscles of the flea, that he may escape more easily from his enemies. The balance of attack and defence is broken and must be restored. If you do not know Tourguéneff's prose poem on this subject, you should read it; you will find it in a volume wrongly called *Senilia.* But to continue the story that you have come to hear: In the eighties my concern was to learn English, and as my English improved my French deteriorated, and to-day I am not certain that the time will not come when I shall walk about Paris with an interpreter, having lost the forlorn and ragged remnant of your language which still wanders about my mind, but if with its final disappearance my English should gain some of the distinction and grace that the language is capable of, I shall be compensated in a measure for what I have lost, and I still encourage the hope that if I live till ninety and keep my health and intellect all the time I shall be able to write it nearly as well as I should like to write it. You're thinking of Hokusai, my visitor interjected, who said, that if he lived till ninety he would be able to draw, and if you live to that age, forgetting French and learning English, you and I might be of some use to each other, for between this and then I might acquire such a knowledge of English as might justify you in engaging me as your interpreter.

Even so, I replied, my life would not be put straight, for the use of language is not everything, and the more I think of it the more certain do I feel that Providence did me a great wrong when she took me out of this country to learn English instead of leaving me here to learn French, for the best work is done in conjunction rather than in opposition to public opinion. In England

I am an Ishmael, almost a Cain: everybody's hand against me and mine against everybody. But do you not hope that public opinion will—— Will change, I interjected. Oh yes, my death will do me a great deal of good. As soon as the grave closes great toleration will spread like oil calming the troubled water; Edmund Yates' article: This book ought to be burnt by the common hangman, while the author is being whipped at the cart's tail, will be forgotten, but not till then. Only the other day my cousin, a Carmelite nun at Lourdes, wrote to ask me to burn my books, and my answer to her is on the table; read it to me, for your French accent will tell me if any flavour of the French of Paris remains in my French too long exiled at Stratford atte Bowe.

Lettre de Georges Moore à sa Cousine Germaine, Carmélite depuis 23 ans.

Ma chère Cousine,—

Ta bonne et gentile lettre m'a fait plaisir, et j'y ai songé longtemps. . . . Sans que tu t'en doutes, je songe à toi et à ta destinée si étrange, si romantique; car il n'y a rien de plus romantique que de s'enfermer dans un cloître pour échapper à la vie; à moins qu'il ne soit encore plus romantique de s'échapper d'un cloîtres pour se reconciller avec la vie.

Ma chère Cousine, ta lettre, comme, l'églantine dans le bois, respire ton âme pieuse et exaltée et je vois que 23 ans dans un cloître ne t'ont pas rendu moins femme; tes sentiments ont pris un autre tour, voilà tout. Il me semble que le couvent a même conservé ton cœur, il est frais, tendre, et spontané. . . . Je me sens attiré vers toi que je n'ai jamais vue et que je ne verrai jamais. Chère petite cousine, je te vois au fond de ton cloître français avec les yeux bruns de ta sœur et j'entends encore dans ta voix un léger accent anglais. Ta lettre me montre que

tu n'as pas oublié ton anglais, et si je t'écris en français c'est parce que je causerai plus à mon aise avec toi sous le voile d'une langue étrangère; et si je te tutoie c'est à peu près pour la même raison. Nous habitons des sphères différentes; nous sommes aussi éloignés l'un de l'autre que l'oiseau du poisson. Mais quoique nos idées ne soient pas les mêmes nos âmes sont germaines et nous sommes les deux réveurs d'une famille peu réveuse; les deux qui ont su faire des sacrifices—toi pour Dieu, moi pour l'Art. Qu'importe le sacrifice pourvu qu'on se sacrifie!

Chère cousine, ne crois pas pour un instant que je me permette la moindre ironie. Je te parle du fond de mon cœur et si je te dis des choses qui te semblent étranges c'est parce que chacun porte en soi sa verité et que ce qui est vrai pour l'un est faux pour l'autre. Tu n'accepteras pas cette doctrine; je le sais; mais puisque le mot doctrine m'a échappé il faut que je dise que ta lettre contient une héresie. L'Eglise Romaine admet que le salut est possible pour le protestant pourvu qu'il soit de bonne foi; mais tu ajoutes qu'il n'y a pas de salut pour l'apostat. Qui te l'a dit? Pas ton confesseur? L'Eglise Romaine a canonisé bien des saints, mais elle a toujours evité de damner formellement ses ennemis. J'ai oui dire que Judas est une exception mais tout de même le catholique peut ésperer que la bonté de Jesus Christ est telle qu'il a pu pardonner au traître.

L'histoire de Saint Brandan est parmi les plus anciennes de nos legendes. Dans son voyage vers le nord, vers le pôle, le Saint vit un homme aux cheveux roux; il crut d'abord voir Jesus Christ, mais lorsque sa barque s'approcha du glacier il comprit que le visage sinistre ne pouvait être autre que celui de Judas. Judas lui raconte qu'une fois par an, pour une heure, il lui était permis quitter l'enfer et de soulager ses brûlures au contact de l glace, et cette grâce lui fut accordée parce qu'il avait jete son manteau sur un lépreux mourant à Jappa. Tu vois, chère cousine, que la miséricorde de Dieu est plus grande que tu ne le croyais. Je ne te demande pas d'accepter cette douce légende comme une vérité; mais elle démontre combien l'Eglise Romaine est peu disposée à croire qu'il y ait des âmes qui brûlent. La légende va trop loin peut-être, mais en tout cas tu énonces une héresie quand tu dis: pas de salut pour l'apostat. Interroge ton confesseur, et il te dira que j'ai raison. Mais voilà assez de théologie. Revenons à l'Art—à mon ami Huysmans. Comment as-tu su qu'il était mon ami? Sait-on donc tout dans les couvents? Huysmans fut mon ami pendant de longues années, mais tu te trompes quand tu dis qu'il a brûlé ses livres avant sa mort. D'abord ce n'était pas possible; ses livres appartiennent en partie à ses éditejrs et à ses parents, et puis il était trop artiste pour brûler autre chose que ses brouillons. Il n'a pas voulu que les choses inachevées fussent publiées après sa mort.

Si nous laissons de côté la valeur artistique de ses écrits mon cas est le même. D'abord il faudrait racheter tous les droits, et puis faire venir ici 40, 50, peut-être 60,000 volumes. Un livre ne se brûle pas facilement. Le poêle de cuisine ne suffrait pas; un seul livre est assez pour éteindre le feu. Alors il faudrait les réunir, les entasser les uns sur les autres dans mon jardin, et verser quelques barriques de pétrole sur le tas. Songe donc au feu que cela ferait!—les flammes montant plus haut que les maisons, les vitres brisées par la chaleur, les voisins empestés par la fumée. On ne pourrait finir d'émblée; l'incendie que tu me porposes durerait plusieurs jours et plusieurs nuits. La police interviendrait; on me dresserait contravention; j'aurais des procès de mes voisions réclamant des dommages et intéréts. Ma fortune y fondrait.

Une île dans le lac de Carra est le seul endroit propice à l'holocauste littéraire que tu souhaites. Les pierres d'un réduit des anciens guerriers serviraient au brasier, et en y mettant le temps et beaucoup d'huile, on arriverait sans doute à détruire toute ma littérature. Mais . . . il y a un mais . . . tu ne voudrais pas qu'un bon livre périsse avec les mauvais, avec les moins bons, car je ne peux admettre qu'aucun de mes livres soit mauvais. Même à ton point de vue, qui est naturellement restreint, *Esther Waters* est un bon livre. Un critique très avisé a dit que j'ai pris les béatitudes comme motifs et que le livre en est un beau développement. Je ne me soucie pas de défendre cet éloge téméraire, mais il est certain que mon œuvre suscite dans les cœurs pas trop endurcis la compassion pour les filles mères, et qu'elle fait venir des donations à l'asile qui porte le nom de mon roman. Ton cœur est trop tendre et tu connais trop bien les paroles du Christ pour vouloir brûler le livre qui a créé cette maison charitable et qui la soutient. Non plus tu ne voudrais pas que je brûlasse *Sister Teresa* puisqu'en l'écrivant j'ai rêvé très souvent à ton cloître, et en créant l'âme de Sœur Véronique je n'ai songé qu'à toi. Comme toi, elle n'a quitté l'école que pour passer au noviciat. Comme toi, elle n'a jamias regretté le choix de son chemin. Comme toi, elle fut parfaitement heureuse. Tu me dis dans ta lettre que tu l'es, et qu'il n'y a pas un bonheur plus parfait que de vivre avec Dieu et les sacrements. Moi aussi, je puis dire que je suis parfaitement heureux avec mon Art; il remplit ma vie d'un bout à Fautre. Je te l'ai déjà dit, nous sommes les rêveurs d'une famille peu rêveuse. Oui, nous sommes les heureux vraiment. Au lieu de nous fatiguer en vains efforts pour vivre nous nous sommes contentés de rêver. Q'uimporte le rêve, pourvu qu'on rêve!

Maintenant, chère cousine, accepte ma sympathie et mon admiration pour ta vie de sacrifice, si semblable à la mienne, quoique si différente, et sois sûre que j'aurais toujours plaisir à recevoir de tes nouvelles.

CHAPTER 16

BALDERSTON. Your coffee is as excellent as ever, yet you have parted with your cook.

MOORE. Years ago, after supping some of his fragrant Mocha, I said to Frank Harris: I knew you as a bachelor, Harris; I knew you as a married man, and now I know you divorced or separated, but the coffee is always the same. The coffee is the same, he answered, but not for my luck in finding cooks at the several stages you have mentioned who could make good coffee—that were impossible; I teach them all to make coffee. For the making of good coffee only an earthenware coffee pot fitted with a strainer is required; the complicated apparatus we see brought into the dining-room is useless. From three to four spoonfuls go to make a cup. And now comes the secret. Your water is boiling on the gas stove; you pour a little on to the coffee, returning the kettle to the stove to boil up again; and when the coffee has gone through you pour a little more boiling water to get the virtue out of the coffee. And three doses are needed. The cook will try to avoid the trouble but you must insist, for coffee that is not made in this way is worthless.

BALDERSTON. A precious secret this must be to you who are indifferent to wine. But is it really true that you do not care for wine, or is it one of your affectations to say so?

MOORE. My only affectation is complete naturalness, for I am of Emerson's opinion, that it is better to be than to seem. Yes; I am indifferent to the seductions of wine, almost aggressively, it would seem, for one of my oldest friends, Théodore Duret, rarely dines with me without delivering himself of an exordium of my impenitence, in his high falsetto voice. It is extraordinary that a man who likes all the good things of this life and has enjoyed them, art and beautiful women, and to some extent the pleasures of the table, should have missed the taste for wine, he cries.

BALDERSTON. The wine we had for dinner to-night seemed to me all right.

MOORE. An excellent *vin ordinaire*, bought at the Café Royal before the war at about eighteenpence a bottle, a price at which it will never be bought again; and it may be doubted if the St Julien of the future will be as honest a wine as the one we have drunken to-night. Wine there always will be of a sort, on a downward path leading to the apothecary's shop, for the old world is sliding from under our feet, Balderston, and more rapidly than ever.

BALDERSTON. When the war is over——

MOORE. Have I not heard you say we shall all be crying for the good old days of the war. You have not lived long enough in the world, Balderston, and, of all, not thought sufficiently, about the old world come down to us from Nineveh and Babylon——

BALDERSTON. To feel afraid of change. But change did not begin yesterday. The world was never still, not even in the days of Babylon.

MOORE. True; we are always becoming, but till the advent of the nineteenth century the world changed insensibly. The changes were not *des changements à vue*. It may even be maintained that the eighteenth century continued till 1830 or 1840, in England; it continued in Ireland to 1870. You see, Balderston, I was born in feudalism, and my world is over and done. It may not be as far away as the Stone Age, but it is as dead.

BALDERSTON. You are not opposed to all progress?

MOORE. No; but I deprecate calling change progress; for men are the same as they always were, and men's instincts make the world to-day as heretofore.

BALDERSTON. But why speak as if the world could only deteriorate. Why should you assume that it can only change in one direction?

Moore. The earth supports certainly a larger number of human beings than it did in the past, but we're discussing not the earth but the world; and progress in æsthetics is impossible: we cannot believe in sculpture greater than that of Athens and Rome. You will say, if not you another, that the genius of Phidias cannot be proven like a sum in arithmetic; all the same it will never die, for there will always be art of a sort in the world to keep it alive in man's conscience.

Balderston. But what are your reasons for assuming that the art of the future will not equal the art of the past?

Moore. My reasons are clear and explicit reasons——

Balderston. Forgive me for interrupting you, but would it not be better to begin by defining art?

Moore. Tolstoy in his work—*What is Art?*—prints dozens of definitions, gathered from the best works on æsthetics, but so little did these satisfy him that he found himself obliged to seek another out, and the one he asks us to choose in preference to Herbert Spencer's definition, that art amuses grown-ups just as dolls amuse children, is that art is a medium whereby we communicate sensations to others, a definition that satisfies me less than Herbert Spencer's, for if a man treads upon my toe violently, he communicates a sensation, but it can hardly be contended that by doing so he creates a work of art. A thing does not cease to exist because it cannot be defined. Let us talk about art, and in the course of conversation you will gather my reasons for believing that the democratic world which lies ahead of us will fail to produce anything that will make the art of Phidias and Michelangelo seem shabby.

Balderston. If we may not try to define what art is it might not be amiss to come to terms regarding the origin of art.

Moore. An instinctive desire in man to imitate nature. You may indeed, if you like, throw a stumbling-block in my way, saying that the springhead of art can be discovered in superstition, inasmuch as the excellent drawings done by cave men of deer and horses were inspired by the belief that to draw the animal was to put him to death potentially. But I submit this to be but scientific psychology, for have we not, among our collections of prehistoric drawings, one of a woman in the family way, and it can hardly be pleaded that this drawing was made so that she might be potentially killed and eaten. So in the absence of any proof to the contrary we will continue to believe that the sketch of the woman with child was man's first comment on the mysteries of nature; a very natural and touching comment it is too, an awakening of poetry in the heart. The cave men in their visitings overlooked each other's drawings, so to the original instinct there came a second, the instinct to take hints from the neighbour in the hill over yonder; and when the races assembled in the plains of Mesopotamia to build cities, the first artistic period had passed by, inasmuch as it was now mixed with many other visions, and out of this mingling of vision arose the strange awe-inspiring winged bulls of Assyria, for Assyria was before Egypt. Art as it turned westward inclined towards naturalism, as an Egyptian lion in the British Museum tells us plainly, while warning us that a new art formula was forming in men's minds in a year somewhere, shall we say, not later than a thousand before our era. Be the date of this lion what it may, the general question is not affected thereby, that many minds are required for the invention of a complete art formula, that we must peep over each other's shoulders occasionally, but only occasionally, and that before the days of locomotive, nations, speaking broadly, knew little of one another. It may be said that Greek art came from ths Egyptian, but it was a long way from Memphis to Athene —a trip which few men took and at such long intervals that Greek genius had time to absorb all the barbarous gods of Asia, turning Jehovah into Zeus and Astoreth into Venus. We owe everything to the Greeks, even Jesus, and it behoves me to remark here (the phrase, we must only occasionally look over our neighbour's shoulder, being insufficient) that if a shipload of Elgin Marbles had been landed in Yokohama in the seventeenth century, there would have been no Japanese art. The Japanese would have said, this is the thing to do, and they would have imitated the Greeks as badly as the Romans and every other European race have done.

Now it was in or about the fourth century that the Greek tradition died, leaving the world without art till the thirteenth century, for it was about that time that men began to invent the Gothic, a style arising out of ignorance of the Parthenon; and it was in or about the fourteenth century that Greece was rediscovered, bringing to birth the Renaissance, a combination of classic and Gothic, so it has been described and perhaps with some truth; a book might be devoted to the discussion of this subject, but though it could be shown that some of the Gothic tradition can be discovered in a Renaissance cathedral it is plain that the desire of the Renaissance was to escape from all Gothic influence; and if they did not return to the Greek temple it was because Christianity had drawn the populace to religion; it was no longer sufficient that the priests should honour the Gods in the name of the people; more room was required, and the palatial period known as the Renaissance built palatial cathedrals. It was all palace in those days. The painters and sculptors of the sixteenth century never lost sight of the palace; it was always in their minds, inspiring their art just as the house inspired the Dutch painters of the seventeenth century. We have now arrived at a sixth artist period, one which may be designated by a single word—atmosphere, for atmosphere was never out of the minds of the Dutch painters even in their Italian journeys.

A Dutch mist is about in Cuyp's pictures even when he was preoccupied by the golden glow which Fromentin says came to him from Italy; the great critic-painter might have added, that if we cannot acquit Rembrandt of having snatched little figures from Pinturicchio, we must allow that he raised them out of littleness.

BALDERSTON. Steal, therefore, if you can, for to do so is a virtue if you can turn the stolen penny into a ducat's worth by your handicraft, and steal from the poor by all means, for their light is hidden under a bushel.

MOORE. I approve your every word, for true art and true Christianity have nothing in common, and we can easily imagine the great joy it would have been to the Italian to whom Rubens was indebted on beholding the realisation of his dream in Antwerp. Such unselfish participation in the glory of art was possible in the happy time before art was, in Whistler's phrase, turned on to the town, a wench to be chucked under the chin by every passer-by, the whimsy, as he would have liked to word it, of art critics and baronets. In *The Ten o'Clock* he blared his dislike of the art patron before he met the baronet, without, however, telling us how the artist would live if there were no patrons; which is the parasite, it is hard to say, but it is safe to look upon patrons as co-essential, and coeval though not necessarily coequal with the artists. The twain have thriven on each other, and will continue to do so while there are artists.

BALDERSTON. Do you think the time is coming when there will be no more artists?

MOORE. The Muses are averse from locomotion.

BALDERSTON. When Stephenson was asked what would happen to a cow if the animal should stray on to the railway line he replied that it would be bad for the cow; and if he had been a prophet as well as an inventor he would probably have said: Of cows there are plenty, and we can afford to lose a few, but I trust the Muses will keep off the lines.

Moore. I cannot recall at this moment the names and employments of the nine, nor which Muse has charge of the plastic arts.

Balderston. I too should be puzzled to recall all their names. It would seem they have all perished; such sedate and high-browed females would have been run over easily; Terpsichore, indeed, might have skipped out of the way of the train, but Calliope, Melpomene and Urania walk in meditation.

Moore. The old world walked in meditation dreaming a more beautiful world, but the present dreams of locomotion only: how it may speed through the landscape almost unconscious of it.

Balderston. Or above it, at a speed of a hundred miles an hour.

Moore. Gazing on the esurient waiter who proffers *café au lait* with such exasperating aggressiveness that the other day in the Tube railway I started from my seat, saying: I cannot sit opposite that man. My travelling companion arose indignant, but smiled when I explained that my remark did not refer to him, but to the waiter. Of art the aerial traveller will know the lady nurse who bears Benger's food with a look of more than mortal calm on her face; he will feast his eyes on the enormous udders of the girl who advertises condensed milk; and upon the four joyous whiskey drinkers, passing on to the face of the family doctor that accompanies the advertisement of Hall's wine—a veritable masterpiece this is in symbolism, a face that launches upon us the villa, the perambulator, the missus, the cook and parlourmaid, and the patient.

Balderston. But may not aerial travelling be used with advantage by art students pressed for time who would visit Madrid with a view to studying the methods of Velazquez and Goya?

MOORE. I am sorry, Balderston, that you should have thrown out that ingenuous apology to aerial travelling. I was looking forward to reading it in the columns of our art critics.

BALDERSTON. You will read it in their columns, dear master, be without fear. But were not the elder civilisations, those we left behind, founded on slavery and oppression of the poor, and is not the happiness of millions worth a marble statue?

MOORE. That men are happier to-day than they were in the past is not part of the present discussion. Allow me to return to æsthetics. In the past the State did not provide art schools for all and sundry.

BALDERSTON. But do not these disseminate a love of art?

MOORE. The art schools set up in Paris in the nineteenth century have attracted students from all parts of the world, and have produced mannerisms, skill, short cuts, that fill the student with shame as soon as he leaves the school; and if he have any talent at all his business is to unlearn all he has been taught. But we do not escape from what we have been taught, and it is no longer easy to say whether a portrait was painted in Lima or Christiania.

BALDERSTON. In *The Confessions of a Young Man* you report Renoir as saying: It may be that men will sacrifice themselves for a picture or a book, but the arts that depend on the support of the public are dead.

MOORE. Renoir thought that the capital could hold out though the suburbs had passed over to our enemy the public! He was wrong. Art holds together in all its forms. To remove one stick is to loosen the bundle. Beautiful furniture and porcelain will not be made again, and the time is by again when nobody will be able to illustrate a book. We pick up for a few shillings a copy of La Fontaine's *Fables* filled with illustrations engraved on steel, and recognise in them an art that has passed away for ever.

Balderston. While giving you an attentive ear to all you say, I have been trying to pick out of my wretched memory the names of the Muses one by one, and I think I have gotten them all: Calliope, the Muse of rhetoric and heroic poetry, stands at their head, and next to her is Thalia, the Muse of pastoral poetry; Erato, the Muse of amatory poetry, comes next, crowned with roses. Clio and Melpomene, Muses of graver mien, preside over history and dramatic poetry. All wind instruments are in the keeping of Euterpe. Urania watches the stars; Terpsichore directs the dance, and——

Moore. And the ninth——

Balderston. I have racked my brains but to no avail, which is a pity, for the ninth may be the Muse that was killed on the railway track.

Moore. And there being no Muse to look after them, the Plastic Arts strayed on to the railway track incontinently and were killed. Your contention then is that all the forms of literature, eloquence, dramatic and pastoral poetry, lyrical and amatory, history, have been saved; a bold contention conceived in a moment of absentmindedness, for you know that the desire of our best authors is to provide a literary fare that will compare favourably with an international dinner at an up-to-date hotel, and this ambition will be realised as soon as they have gotten the universal language, which cannot be long delayed in coming.

Balderston. You think it will be brought over in aeroplanes like rabies?

Moore. With this difference, that though we are averse from catching rabies the common lot would like to speak a few words of as many languages as possible without learning any.

Balderston. I might remind you that you have admitted on more than one occasion that you owe a great deal to France and the French language, but if I were to press you to extricate yourself from the dilemma you are clearly in, I should miss hearing you on a more interesting subject—the decline of language, of the English language presumably, which may be said to have had its beginning at the end of the fifteenth century as a literary language, and to have reached its prime at the end of the sixteenth. You have not forgotten that in Elizabethan days there was already talk of decline.

Moore. But why should I talk on a subject in which you are more knowledgeable than I am.

Balderston. Because you went to Ireland on a grammatical crusade, and remained there upwards of ten years, regretting the dropping of the Anglo-Saxon cases; and I suppose it is arguable that prepositions are not as graceful as cases.

Moore. I am altogether with you regarding the cases, but the loss of these is but a small loss compared with that of the second person singular of the verb.

Balderston. Which we Quakers tried to revive for moral reasons.

Moore. A most interesting experiment, which dropped you into quagmire, the beautiful nominative *thou* disappearing, and *thee* serving for nominative and dative, a barbarism that sets me thinking that our race is altogether insensible to the charm of grammar.

Balderston. You would not place grammar above idiom?

Moore. Idiom is lord over grammar; yet it is hard to imagine a language in which there is no rule, only usage.

Balderston. But a language in which every word agrees with another word, like Latin, moves with difficulty and in stricken attitudes.

Moore. But is that true? We never meet anybody unwilling to admit that if he had to choose verses other than his own he would choose to sign Virgil's. I remember Catulle Mendès likening, one night of great moonlight in the Place Pigalle, French poetry to two horses yoked to a chariot cantering in perfect rhythm, and English poetry to winged horses that could rise above the earth.

Balderston. But is it not well to rise from the earth?

Moore. It is indeed, but on the condition that you do not lose yourself in the clouds; a misfortune that may happen if grammar is thrown to the winds. You see I am still thinking of the aeroplane. *You* has become singular, yet it is used with a plural verb; and the eighteenth century was right, we should say *you was;* and having lost its grammar, it would seem that the English language is in a fair way of losing its romantic idiom, by which it lives as a literary language, for every Board School teacher deems it her duty to wring all living idiom out of the children. I hear a good deal of *thouing and theeing* going on, so I suppose you wish to remain little peasants all your lives, the teacher cries, speaking from the threshold to the little ones at play.

The Board School is the enemy of the writer as the photographer is the enemy of the painter, and literature is snuffed out by the Minister of Education, who is, of course, resolute that everybody shall receive a huge dose of education before going to work in the factory or the mine. The curriculum includes a course of modern languages, despite the fact that nobody can learn a second language, and very few a first. The Minister cannot hold a conversation in French, and knows he could not learn French if he were to spend years at it, but he thinks he can teach; alas, everybody thinks he can teach. And in accordance with this belief hundreds come up to Kensington to pass examinations in modelling clay apples, getting a diploma thereby, which will enable them to teach sculpture in the provinces. A little drawing, a little sculpture, a little piano, and of all a little French, for every boy and girl must have a chance of learning French; and the result of the French lesson is that the middle classes will soon know as much French as the upper, which amounts to no more than a sufficiency of French words for the corruption of the English language. To many people it sounds refined, even cultured, to drop stereotyped French into stereotyped English phrases. To use *badinage* for *banter*, and to think that there is a shade of difference, or I suppose I should say, a *nuance* of meaning. Yes, Balderston, I am looking forward to reading in the newspapers a *précis* of a *résumé* of a *communique*. You see I omit the accent on the last *e*, and I wish you would tell me if the people who speak and write this jargon think that *résumé* is more refined than summary, abridgment, compendium. In society every woman is *très raffinée*. I once met an author who had written *small and petite*, and when I asked him why he did it, he said: *Petite* means dainty as well as small; I said: No, it doesn't, but if you wanted to say *dainty*, why didn't you say dainty? One of the most beautiful words in our language is *bodice*, but it has given way to *corsage*, and there is no author now living amongst us who would not prefer to write: the delicious *naïveté* of it, rather than: the delicious simplicity of it, or the delicious innocency of it. None seems aware that *naïveté* is a dead word in our language, yet the wretches say they cannot express their ideas unless they be permitted to use French, to which I answer: do not worry about the ideas, think of the words, and of all, try to distinguish between the quick and the dead. Innocency and simplicity have been in the language for more than two hundred years, and are fragrant of it. For the last four months we have had *armistice*, never *truce*, and it is hard to discover a modern book in which the writer does not flaunt his knowledge of the word *métier*. I say flaunt, for he must know that he has three words to choose from: trade, business, craft. Our language is becoming leaner. Translate *Memoirs of my Dead Life*, and you get *Mémoirs de ma Vie Morte*. I have a cousin in a convent at Lourdes, and thinking she might have forgotten English in the twenty years she had spent in France, I wrote to her in French, and there came into my letter this phrase: *Nous sommes les deux rêveurs d'une famille peu rêveuse*, a phrase difficult to render into English owing to that lack of grammar which the unity of our Empire demands. Everything has its price—Empire assuredly: it would seem that we must furnish a language that can be learnt easily by our dependencies, and we are doing it, shall I say, by leaps and bounds. In America you invent new words, and all that comes out of our own imagination is welcome; yet many who would not write *stunt*, take pleasure in that disgraceful word *camouflage*, turning it recklessly into a verb, a thing unthinkable to a Frenchman or to anybody who has acquired even a small part of the French ear. But can you tell me which possesses the most complete grammar, English or Sioux?

BALDERSTON. When I was at Harvard, Sioux was optional.

MOORE. Probably the Sioux is, and it would have been better if you had adopted Sioux, for there is no extensive literature in Sioux, I believe; and the womb being young and Indians uneducated you would get an influence comparable to that which the peasant exercised before English was corrupted by the Board School. Peasants use images inspired by what they look at. If I ask my parlour-maid, who was a peasant a while ago, to find something I have lost, she will say: I'll have a look around. If I ask you, you will answer: I'll try to find it. Which phrase conveys the image? But it seems to me, Balderston, that I have been exceptionally talkative this evening, and I beg you to say something and allow me to slink into silence for a little while.

BALDERSTON. When you went to Paris and became the friend of all the great writers and painters of the seventies and the eighties, you listened to them; you did not interrupt Goncourt with crude opinions, for in the seventies you were only beginning to form the opinions which you can cast into words to-day.

MOORE. A gracious and a sensible answer, and yet almost a reproof.

BALDERSTON. No reproof was intended; a statement of a fact can hardly be considered as a reproof.

MOORE. Quite true; the reproof came from me. I reproved you for leaving me to do all the talking.

BALDERSTON. As soon as the position of the armies on the Flanders front creeps in my turn will come, and lest it should come too soon I will remark that I see a brown book on the table. Whistler's *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*. The very thing! Let me set him against you. He shall speak for me, giving reasons, which you will find hard to refute, why there never was an artistic period, and that the artist is a man apart from and uninfluenced by his fellows, thereby denying that segregation, locomotion, or any external conditions can have any influence whatever upon art, since art is the artist.

MOORE. Thereby asserting that if he, Whistler, had been born in the fifteenth century, he would have painted pictures similar in style to those he painted in the nineteenth. We sparred round that question in Paris, and Whistler began to explain that he had been misunderstood, and as that means in Whistlerian that he had begun to think he had gone too far, I did not tease him, saying, that an artistic period only meant a time in which there are more good artists than at another time, asking him if he was prepared to deny that there were more great artists in the sixteenth century than in the tenth, that Michelangelo, Donatello, Andrea del Sarto and Leonardo lived contemporaneously in a town half as big as Chelsea and so forth. As a sledge-hammer is not a weapon to pursue a butterfly with, I will tell a tale. Story, a sculptor, had given evidence favourable to Whistler in the Whistler-Ruskin action for libel, and ever afterwards Whistler felt himself compelled to speak of the trays of little figures six inches high which Story used to exhibit in the Grosvenor Galleries as very similar, if not altogether equal to the Elgin Marbles, and I being in those days entirely submissive to Whistler's genius, did not dare do else than to acquiesce in this strange appreciation of Story's very small talent. Every time his name was mentioned my face brightened. Story—Elgin Marbles, of course! But no sooner was the master's back turned than my face darkened, and I began to ask myself why Story's figures were like the Elgin Marbles, and all spare moments were spent in trying to unriddle the riddle; till one day in the Grosvenor Gallery, as I stood pondering the problem of the likeness of Story's figures to the Elgin Marbles, I caught sight of Whistler coming down the Gallery. Now or never, I said, is my chance to find out the Why, and catching the master by the arm, I said: Tell me, sir, why these figures are like the Elgin Marbles? Well, you see, Whistler answered: you know—well—you see you can take it up and you can put it down; and then, you see, you look at it; you can take it up; you can put it down; you look at it again—and that which is—why, of course, the relation of art to nature—the prerogative of the artist, for art is not nature because it is art, and nature is not art because it is art—nature which is not art because it is nature—art which is not nature because—well, because the spontaneous creation and living creation of the artist is—— And leaving his sentence still hung up, he cried: Come along, my dear fellow—come along, lunch, bunch—lunch, bunch—lunch, bunch—lunch, bunch.

As I have said, Story had given evidence for Whistler in his suit against Ruskin, and Whistler's notion of gratitude was to compare Story's work to the Elgin Marbles.

Balderston. A very amusing anecdote. But I should like to hear why Whistler said that an artist stands apart and is uninfluenced by his surroundings.

Moore. One day we were out walking, the master and I, and he said: Moore, what stupid, ugly boots you're wearing. And in great surprise I answered: Stupid, ugly boots! Why are they ugly? I thought them a remarkable good fit. They came only a week ago from Bull's in the Burlington Arcade, and he is reputed to be—— Why wear such ugly boots? the master continued. Boots with toes pointed like yours are not fit to be worn by a man who—— A burst of laughter cut the sentence short, and presently I heard that a square-toed boot is the only boot that any artist who considers himself can wear. I had not thought pointed toes shocking or frightful, but, never thinking to contest Whistler's judgment, I determined forthright not to order another pair, and not to wear the pair on my feet except in the country, when nobody was looking. It was not long afterward that I met Mrs. Whistler, and fortuning to say something about her husband's views of æsthetic boots, she answered: Jimmie has to wear square toes for he has a deformed foot. So you see, his foot being deformed he found himself obliged to evolve a theory that square toes were beautiful and pointed toes ugly, and because he was an American and America had no artistic tradition, he found himself obliged to declare at the top of his voice that there had never been an artistic period and that the artist was apart from and uninfluenced by his fellows. He learnt his painting in Paris from Courbet and others, but to hide the fact that he was a product like every man he spoke of his days in Paris as idle days, saying that while others were at work in the studios he was sauntering in the public gardens or dreaming along the quays. I am that I am, was his belief as much as it was Iahveh's; more than it was his Palestinian predecessor's, for he did not call in his Moses to write his commandments, he wrote them himself, and *Ten O'Clock* was written to compel others to regard him as a prodigy, a sort of sacrament, an article of faith.

BALDERSTON. I see that he has written in your copy of *The Gentle Art*. May I read?

MOORE. Certainly.

BALDERSTON. To George Moore—for furtive reading.

MOORE. You see Whistler had read *Modern Painting*, and finding that there were some pages in the book which fell in with his own appreciation of the art of painting he could not do else than suggest to me that *Modern Painting* was derived from *The Ten o'Clock*, hence the inscription. He asked me if I would mind if he wrote something, that which, etc. I cannot remember how the sentence ended. It probably did not end, but his manner led me to understand that he wished to put a joke upon me, so I begged him to have his joke, and there it is recorded in his own hand: For furtive reading, which means that anything George Moore writes—anything good that he writes about painting—was plagiarised from me, James McNeill Whistler.

It requires your genius, as Degas said to him, to save you from ridicule. An absurd man in his vanities he was, but his paintings are as original as any, and *The Ten o'Clock* is one of the dainty bits of prose in the English language. Let me read you a passage:

> False again, the fabled link between the grandeur of Art and the glories and virtues of the State, for Art feeds

not upon nations, and peoples may be wiped from the face of the earth, but Art *is*.

It is indeed high time that we cast aside the weary weight of responsibility and co-partnership, and know that, in no way, do our virtues minister to its worth, in no way do our vices impede its triumph!

How irksome! how hopeless! how superhuman the self-imposed task of the nation! How sublimely vain the belief that it shall live nobly or Art perish.

Let us reassure ourselves, at our own option is our virtue. Art we in no way affect.

A whimsical goddess, and a capricious, her strong sense of joy tolerates no dullness, and, live we never so spotlessly, still may she turn her back upon us.

As, from time immemorial, she has done upon the Swiss in their mountains.

What more worthy people! Whose every Alpine gap yawns with tradition, and is stocked with noble story; yet, the perverse and scornful one will have none of it, and the sons of patriots are left with the clock that turns the mill, and the sudden cuckoo, with difficulty restrained in its box!

For this was Tell a hero! For this did Gessler die!

Art, the cruel jade, cares not, and hardens her heart, and hies her off to the East, to find, amid the opium-eaters of Nankin, a favourite with whom she lingers fondly—caressing his blue porcelain, and painting his coy maidens, and marking his plates with her six marks of choice—indifferent in her companionship with him, to all save the virtue of his refinement!

He it is who calls her—he who holds her!

But, Balderston, there is another that you must hear:

That Nature is always right, is an assertion, artistically, as untrue, as it is one whose truth is universally taken for granted. Nature is very rarely right, to such an extent even, that it might almost be said that Nature is usually wrong: that is to say, the condition of things that shall bring about the perfection of harmony worthy a picture is rare, and not common at all.

This would seem, to even the most intelligent, a doctrine almost blasphemous. So incorporated with our education has the supposed aphorism become, that its belief is held to be part of our moral being, and the words themselves have, in our ear, the ring of religion. Still, seldom does Nature succeed in producing a picture.

The sun blares, the wind blows from the east, the sky is bereft of cloud, and without, all is of iron. The windows of the Crystal Palace are seen from all points of London. The holiday maker rejoices in the glorious day, and the painter turns aside to shut his eyes.

How little this is understood, and how dutifully the casual in Nature is accepted as sublime, may be gathered from the unlimited admiration daily produced by a very foolish sunset.

The dignity of the snow-capped mountain is lost in distinctness, but the joy of the tourist is to recognise the traveller on the top. The desire to see, for the sake of seeing, is, with the mass, alone the one to be gratified, hence the delight in detail.

And when the evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry, as with a veil, and the poor buildings lose themselves in the dim sky, and the tall chimneys become campanili, and the warehouses palaces in the night, and the whole city hangs in the heavens, and fairyland is before us—then the wayfarer hastens home; the working man and the cultured one, the wise man and the one of pleasure, cease to understand, as they have ceased to see, and Nature, who, for once, has sung in tune, sings her exquisite song to the artist alone, her son and her master—her son in that he loves her, her master in that he knows her.

To him her secrets are unfolded, to him her lessons have become gradually clear. . . .

Through his brain, as through the last alembic, is distilled the refined essence of that thought which began with the Gods, and which they left him to carry out.

Set apart by them to complete their works, he produces that wondrous thing called the masterpiece, which surpasses in perfection all that they have contrived in what is called Nature; and the Gods stand by and marvel, and perceive how far away more beautiful is the Venus of Melos than was their own Eve.

So beautiful is it, it brings tears to the eyes. Would you like to hear it again?

BALDERSTON. I should indeed.

MOORE. Very few of the younger generation open *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, and fewer still have seen Ruskin's beautiful drawings, for Whistler's dogged egotism forced him to speak disparagingly of them, though none knew their worth as well as he. How much better it would have been to have spewed out of his mouth the thick clotted prose of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and to have praised the pencil that followed pensively the vaporous folds in a certain range of mountains fronting the seashore.

BALDERSTON. You reproved me for my silence, for being too good a listener.

MOORE. You should have forgotten that reproof if it were one.

BALDERSTON. I shall. If by observing a leak in your argument I may make amends for my attention.

MOORE. By all means.

BALDERSTON. Music has not been affected by the steamboat, the railway, the telegraph wire.

MOORE. I am glad you have dragged music into the discussion, for I can tell a tale, how last night in the course of a varied conversation I mentioned to Jean Aubry that I had heard three pieces of music that had set me thinking. I will describe the three pieces to you, I said, and it will be interesting to see if you can guess the composers' names. The first piece was a quintet. The instruments employed were clarinet, violins, viola and violoncello, and in the first movement the composer seemed to have thought only of the melody he might give to the clarinet; and a great pour of rich voluptuous song he gave to it on a background of strings vaguely murmuring, twittering dimly, the cello uttering now and then a few grave notes. And my imagination lighting up at the idea half expressed, I said: a nightingale sings in a bare elm branch, keeping the birds in the hedgerow awake; linnets, willow, wren, chaffinch and garden warbler, cannot sleep, so overpowering is the song. Again it broke forth, provoking the violins to twittering just as if they were no more than linnets, I said. And then the viola awoke suddenly and my thoughts began to seek some bird to which to match it, but before pitching upon one the clarinet, just like a nightingale, compelled me to give all my thoughts to it; curve after curve rising out of melodious curve, spirals forming and melting, new sound shapes rising and passing away like the clouds. I might talk to you of Shelley's *Skylark*, I said, but through that beautiful ode runs a moral thread, and I heard none in the clarinet. You compared the clarinet to the nightingale, Aubry replied.

And he guessed the composer's name correctly. I'm afraid, I said, I cannot give as picturesque a description of the second quinter for the same instruments: clarinet, viola, violins and violoncello, for the piece did not evoke any picture or image in my mind, only a certain admiration for the skill with which the composer broidered the clarinet into the musical texture, never leaving it to outsing the other instruments: excellent music, it was, no doubt, lacking little but nationality and individual genius; the mark of a man who seems to have admired the dry bits in Beethoven. Aubry made two bad guesses and then a good one.

The third piece, I said, began with fifteen or twenty bars of jiggering rhythm that anybody could write if he chose to transcribe what he might hear in a barn in which peasants had assembled for dancing, a ragged prelude to a second movement, one in which I faintly apprehended a sort of chant intended to represent monks singing in a monastery. The instruction given how to produce the maximum amount of discord seemed to be ingeniously contrived, and the last movement (the word movement seems out of keeping with such ragged stuff) represented a juggler at his antics, so one of the musicians informed me; it might have been that or anything else. But you, Aubry, who have much knowledge of modern music, may risk your reputation in the adventure of a guess. He began with guesses wide of the mark, but before admitting defeat, he asked: Is it English music? And on my telling him it was not, he said: Then it is, —— and he blurted out the right name. Of course he may have been feigning a cunning ignorance whereby to astonish me with his cleverness in guessing the authorship of several pieces of music from my verbal description of them. But it doesn't matter if he duped me, for the point I wish to make is that these three pieces of music tell how art is inspired in the first period, sustained by craft, skill, erudition in the second, and falls afterwards into sterile eccentricities.

BALDERSTON. If I were not afraid that the question would lead us far from the subject of this conversation, I should like to ask you the names of the three composers whom your friend was clever enough to guess, but before you tell me, I'd like to ask if art has come to the end of her spool in Europe, may not the Goddess begin to unwind again in America.

Moore. That art is proved among the gone should not concern us overmuch, for the history of art is complete, as Whistler observed in his *Ten o'Clock*; and at the risk of making my own prose seem contemptible I will quote from him again:

Therefore have we cause to be merry!—and to cast away all care—resolved that all is well—as it ever was—and that it is not meet that we should be cried at, and urged to take measures!

Enough have we endured of dullness! Surely are we weary of weeping, and our tears have been cozened from us falsely, for they have called out woe! When there was no grief, and alas! where all is fair!

We have then but to wait—until, with the mark of the Gods upon him—there come among us again the chosen—who shall continue what has gone before. Satisfied that, even were he never to appear, the story of the beautiful is already complete—hewn in the marbles of the Parthenon—and broidered with the birds upon the fan of Hokusai at the foot of Fusiyama.

Every sentence in the page reminds one of the etchers' needle, so exquisite is the touch. Touch he had almost in excess in oil and water and in prose too. But enough of praise. You want an answer to your question: Will art go and will art return—and I'll give the best I can find to-day: it is certain that the formula whereby we have known art for the last four centuries will not return; the field has been reaped, the corn has been garnered.

Balderston. Might not another formula arise in America, a new country?

Moore. Whistler's vanity forbade him to accept the only too evident fact that one man does not create a formula. Many men of genius are needed and certain conditions of life. But as Whistler counsels us we need not make moan over the disappearance of the goddess; other things have taken her place. Locomotion we have of all kinds; we shall soon travel to see and hear the same sights and sounds from one end of the earth to the other? But why make moan? Art will come back to us when these conditions are replaced by others, Balderston. You know, we all know, that for about eight hundred years there was no art; and whatever has happened once will happen again. The best friends have to part often so that they may meet again. Art has been with us for about four hundred years, and four hundred years are a long visit.

BALDERSTON. But will she return in eight hundred years?

MOORE. As likely as not, for the coal that supplies the railways and the manufactories in England will be exhausted in another hundred years.

BALDERSTON. Other means will be discovered—electricity.

MOORE. Why so pessimistic, Balderston? Now it is I who am the optimist, finding happiness in the thought that in about one hundred years the population of England will begin to dwindle, and in about two hundred years there will be fields and gardens where to-day there are cinder heaps. America will remain longer in ugliness, for your coal deposits are larger, and there is more petrol. But coal and petrol are not endless even in America; and as soon as both are among the gone, the world will start on a new race again: the pack horse will be seen on the down; the archer will be met in the forest bending his bow to catch the swift deer with a swifter arrow as he crosses the glade; women will come back to the cottage doors to spin the thread for the weaving of the sheets they lie in; pottery will be made on the wheel; and men will paint it, having recovered the use of their hands, and a new idea of beauty be given to mankind.

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